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A WILD-CAT SCHEME

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BY

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"ROYAL PALACES OF ENGLAND."

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TO

FOREST FARM

AND MY FIRST KIND CRITICS

AUTHOR'S NOTE

All the circumstances of the story are purely imaginary, including the part about the Arcos Company, except the mention of the police raid on their premises, which is a matter of common knowledge.

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"It is *Fear*, oh little Hunter, it is *Fear*!"

Rudyard Kipling.

CHAPTER I

KATE PARKER came tripping down the front stairs of Greystones House, in the little village of Greystones, in Dorsetshire, feeling light-hearted, although it was only six o'clock, and a cold morning in March.

Kate was not allowed to go down the front stairs at this unhallowed hour. In fact, as under-housemaid, she was never allowed to go down them at all for her own convenience, she was only allowed to sweep and polish them for the upper housemaid's convenience. She and Elsie, the kitchenmaid, took turns to be the first of the household up in the morning, to open the back door in good time, because the cook, Mrs. Crutcher and her husband, the under-gardener, slept in a cottage, on the other side of the stable-yard, and woe betide the luckless wight who had not opened the door before Mrs. Crutcher arrived ! Life was not worth living for several days afterwards, because Mrs. Crutcher, though usually a most comfortable woman, when roused, had a sharp tongue and a still sharper eye for minor delinquencies.

The proper routine was to gather up the boots and shoes left on the table at the top of the back stairs, drop them in the boot-boy's lair at the bottom

of the stairs, open the back door and the shutters in the kitchen. If it were Elsie's turn she would light the kitchen fire before she went into the hall to open the shutters there, unbolt the front door, and then continue to open shutters everywhere—millions of shutters—as Kate and Elsie thought crossly, when they had overslept themselves.

But on this particular morning, it was Kate's turn, and it was not her job to light the kitchen fire. She was feeling light-hearted because it had been her afternoon out the day before, employed in rehearsing for a concert to be given by the Women's Institute. She had been complimented on her singing by the choirmaster, and on her general attractiveness by Joe Buggins, at least she supposed it was meant for a compliment when he took her arm on the way home. She felt that she had achieved a social success, and as such was entitled to use the front stairs. So she came peacocking down, humming a tune and twinkling at her own reflection in the framed glasses of a myriad of beautiful prints that covered the staircase wall on her left side. The skylight made these stairs much lighter than the back stairs before she opened the shutters, and besides she could shirk the boot and shoe business.

As she came down something rustled a little under the stairs—oh, Camp (short for Campbell)—she supposed, Miss Joan's dog, who ought not to be sleeping in the house, but she forgot about him in the strong smell of burnt-out lamps that greeted her. It was so old-fashioned a house that, in spite

of its modern sons and daughters, only oil-lamps illuminated its darkness. Kate concluded that Miss Eleanor Wentworth, who was staying with her uncle, Mr. Robert Preston, the owner of the house, had forgotten to put out the lamps when she went to bed.

Kate sniffed with distaste. How beastly the lamps would be to do this morning ! Miss Eleanor was not quite young, she was always writing or reading, and though she was friendly and gentle with the servants and gave very little trouble, she was certainly absent-minded, as if her thoughts were often somewhere else. She never talked and chattered incessantly, like most ladies, Kate thought. She was, socially, rather silent, but sometimes she said things that made them all laugh.

At the same time, Kate felt that Miss Eleanor might have remembered the lamps. The little housemaid could not recollect that they had ever been forgotten before. Mr. Preston was very particular about them. He would be vexed. Kate smiled a little to herself, as she returned to the hall after unbolting the back door; he would make no bones about letting Miss Eleanor know that he was vexed. He was rather an irritable old gentleman, with a nervous temperament—Kate thought of it as " peppery "—but he was a dear all the same, his household were very fond of him, even devoted to him. Kate wondered what it was that made you fond of some people, so that you always wanted to please them. Her mind wandered, irrelevantly, to Joe Buggins, rather a one,

he was, that boy, taking her arm like that, and saying that the lane was dark. . . .

She unlocked the front door, put back the hall shutters, and opened the windows, and then, whistling quite softly one of the tunes they had practised the night before, she went into the library, where Mr. Preston and Miss Eleanor had been sitting in the evening, and the smell of smouldered wick was perfectly dreadful, because of the two large lamps that had burnt themselves out. There was a wide bow-window in the room, with blue curtains of some soft silky stuff, which she had to draw before she went to work on "them—damned—shutters."

Kate was proud of the swear-word, that she had often heard the young ladies use, though her father had given her the strap for it once, when she said it at home. He had used some language himself on the occasion, which Kate thought unfair.

She opened the window, and somehow it occurred to her that the room was very cold and silent. She took a step back, and then she saw why the lamps had been forgotten. On the floor, in a sort of heap, "all crumpled-up like," as Kate described her attitude afterwards, lay Miss Eleanor.

Kate was of the modern world, and a country girl, not easily frightened, but there was a look of terror and horror in that white face on the floor before her, that made her blood run cold. So she said to Elsie, later, but she kept enough presence of mind to touch Miss Eleanor's hand, and then

she knew. Country children, who live in small cottages, are not sheltered from the sight and knowledge of death. Kate knew that Miss Eleanor, studious, gentle, quiet Miss Eleanor, was dead.

That was why she had forgotten the lamps. . . .

Kate drew a long breath and began to cry, then she rushed out of the room, to find Mrs. Crutcher, or Wilkins, the chauffeur. They would know what to do. Why was she dead? Who could have killed her? Miss Eleanor—oh—Miss Eleanor!

Mrs. Crutcher had arrived, and so had Wilkins, who was also Mr. Preston's body-servant, and took tea up to his master early, because Mr. Preston did not sleep well. Wilkins and his wife had a cottage a little way up the road, beyond the garden. He was rather a delicate man, and as he said, it gave him "quite a turn," when Kate rushed into the kitchen crying and vociferating that Miss Eleanor—oh—Miss Eleanor—was dead—in the library!

Wilkins at first thought that the girl was hysterical, and he gave her a sharp shake with his hand on her shoulder. Elsie was raking out the kitchen fire and stopped, with her mouth wide open, he was afraid that she was going to join in this extraordinary and deplorable outcry.

Mrs. Crutcher was boiling the kettle for everybody's early tea over a little oil stove. She looked comfortable and competent in her print dress and big apron. "What do you mean, Kate? What are you saying about Miss Eleanor? There!

Stop crying, girl, and tell us quiet-like. No one's going to hurt you." Kate had shrunk away from Wilkins' grip of her shoulder, and she looked frightened—terrified—it made Mrs. Crutcher catch her breath a little—Kate was not easily frightened. What ailed the girl?

"Miss Eleanor is dead—in the library—on the floor. Oh—do come! Do come! Someone has killed her."

Then Mrs. Crutcher and Wilkins realised that something had really happened. He put down the tray that he had taken up, she took the kettle off the stove, and they followed Kate to the library. Elsie, with the hearth-brush in her hand, crept after them. If someone had killed Miss Eleanor, she wanted to see. She had seen murders at "the picshurs," but she did not know that they took place in real life—among the gentry. It occurred to her—she was only fifteen—that they had had a very fine wedding in the house last year, before she came, when Miss Joan was married, and this year a murder! It seemed rather an exciting place for a girl to be in after all, though she always told her mother that it was so countrified and dull.

Kate cried and sobbed, and Mrs. Crutcher began to cry, too, directly she saw that pathetic figure on the floor, Miss Eleanor, whom she had known and liked for so many years. Miss Eleanor, who always came to have a chat in the kitchen, and made fun about Mrs. Crutcher's "extravagance at Woolworth's." It all flashed through Mrs. Crutcher's mind as she saw the crumpled helpless

figure on the floor, in the mauve velvet frock that they had all admired. . . .

Wilkins was of a sternly practical cast of mind. It was a shock to him to see Miss Eleanor there, but he had learnt a few things during the war, and he knelt down to feel her pulse, and listen for her breathing. Like Kate, he knew death when he saw it. He also saw that Eleanor's forehead, the left temple, was bruised and gashed; it had been bleeding pretty freely—she had been knocked on the head . . . who . . . who could have done such a thing? He noticed, as Kate had noticed, the look of fright and horror in the dead face. What was the last thing those eyes had seen?

Wilkins got up, feeling a little sick, but he spoke sharply to the two weeping women, holding each other's hands.

"I must telephone for the doctor, and for Pratt. Don't you move a thing. Perhaps you had better stay here, Mrs. Crutcher, till the doctor comes. Kate can go and get the tea. Nobody must tell Mr. Preston. Dr. Calgarrie will tell him."

Quite self-possessed, Wilkins went to the door, and did not know why he felt obliged to rub his sleeve across his eyes. It was a shock anyhow, and he did not know how his master would take it. Sooner, or later, in Wilkins' mind, everything revolved round his master. Then he saw Mrs. Crutcher stooping over Miss Eleanor, taking her poor limp hand. . . . "No," he said, "you must not touch her. I think you'd better come and I'll

lock the door. Shut the window too, Kate, will you?"

It was not for nothing that Wilkins had driven his master into Calverstoke to sit on the Bench weekly for a good many years. He had picked up various scraps of pseudo-legal knowledge from Mr. Preston himself and from different people, including the Calverstoke police and Pratt, the local constable, and of one thing he felt sure, if anyone died in any unexpected fashion, they ought not to be moved except in the presence of the doctor and the police. The blood on Miss Eleanor's forehead was proof enough that she had not come by her death in any natural or accidental manner.

He drove out Mrs. Crutcher and Kate, who by that time wanted to stay and exclaim and wonder, and Mrs. Crutcher earnestly wished to make that poor dead body "comfortable." "She'll be as stiff as stiff," she said indignantly to Wilkins.

"I can't help it. We don't want to get into trouble with the police, do we? They might say we were hiding evidence. Might say we had done it ourselves, Mrs. Crutcher."

Mrs. Crutcher returned to the kitchen murmuring, and still crying, to get what solace she could out of the head housemaid, Dawson, who by that time had made her leisurely appearance, had sent Elsie back to the scullery with "a flea in her ear," and in a dignified manner was anxious to hear what had happened. It was a trying moment for her, because West, the parlourmaid, was away, and Daw-

son had—or thought she had—a great deal to get through.

Wilkins rang up the doctor and Pratt, the policeman, and put through a trunk call to Mr. Anthony, Mr. Preston's eldest son, who was a don at Oxford. Anthony said that he would start at once to come to his father. He was greatly shocked and distressed to hear of the death of his cousin, for whom he had a real affection, also he was angry and perturbed on his father's account. "Don't let him know, Wilkins, if you can help it, until I come, or at all events until you have the doctor. Shocks are bad for him."

At that moment Mr. Preston's bell rang impatiently. Wilkins was very late with his master's tea. He promised Anthony to do what he could, and fled to the kitchen, where Mrs. Crutcher had had the presence of mind to boil the kettle.

Dr. Calgarrie and Pratt arrived practically together. They knew each other very well. In their respective official capacities they had gone through many things together. Among the nervous servants they inspired the confidence that the man of experience and knowledge always does inspire among those more ignorant. A sort of peace, still excited but less alarmed, settled down on the kitchen. They even ate some breakfast, because although the younger ones were afraid that it was heartless and possibly improper, Mrs. Crutcher and Dawson, with their wider outlook on life, agreed that even with a murder in the house work had to be done, and if one must work, one must also eat.

Kate sat in silence, and was regarded by the others with commiseration and some respect, had she not found "the corpse"? She would be the first to be questioned by Pratt, when the doctor had done with him. Perhaps the older women would have been shocked and disgusted if they had known her thoughts, and still more shocked and disgusted if it could have been brought home to them that they themselves were the foundation and origin of those thoughts.

Kate was considering how she might tell her story, and make it true and convincing without revealing the fact that she had come down the front stairs.

Let him that is without fault cast the first stone. Is not self-preservation the strongest instinct in human nature? Kate knew what Mrs. Crutcher and Dawson were like when anyone broke the rules of the house. The fact that to her, Kate's, mind the rules were insensate, and that anyhow a girl who had been complimented on her singing and her looks—she knew what attracted Joe Buggins, it was not her voice—had a right to do what she liked.

Dawson was evidently in one of her worst moods, she had certainly got out on the wrong side of her bed, so much had been conveyed to Kate by Elsie's covert grimaces. Murders had no softening effect on Dawson. Quite the contrary; you could not look for tears or a chance to gossip from Dawson. She would harry and hurry you through your work all the morning as a relief for her feelings—if she

had any, thought Kate vindictively, and if she knew about "those stairs" . . . Kate's really ruffled conscience and her cowardly imagination strove together. After all, it would make no difference to Miss Eleanor.

She asked suddenly, "Where is Camp?"

The others were a little startled, they were talking, in hushed voices, as was meet, of the tragedy in their midst, and had no time to spare for a dog.

"Really——" began Dawson.

"He might have barked," said Kate, hastily.

They looked at her with slightly increased respect. None of them had thought of that.

"He was not in the house," said Mrs. Crutcher, "Wilkins took him home, because Camp was to go to the vet to-day."

It was Kate who looked startled this time. If it were not Camp who rustled——?

"I want him to sleep in the house," said Mrs. Crutcher. "There's rats about, I feel sure. I think there's some holes under the front stairs."

"I have not seen any," said Dawson, frostily. Under the front stairs was *her* province. Kate felt relieved. Any explanation was better than none, though like Dawson she had not seen any holes under the front stairs, and up to that moment had not believed in Mrs. Crutcher's mythical rats. But she had remembered with uneasiness that Camp generally made a great fuss to be let out directly he heard anyone moving in the morning. She would have told Pratt about the rustle, she said to herself, though not that she heard it from the

stairs, but now she would not mention it. It was rats, of course.

Pratt's enquiries elicited nothing more from Kate. She had come down as usual, with the keys of the two doors, which were kept upstairs at night, and opened the back door, unbolted the front door, opened the shutters, hall first, then library. Elsie had opened the shutters in the kitchen and servants' hall. Pratt discovered that the usual routine had been dropped after that point. None of the other shutters downstairs had been opened. He was glad because it gave him a chance to look at them. They were all safely barred. In the old days, in fact until within the last ten or fifteen years, a bell had been hung on each shutter. But that had been discontinued, chiefly under pressure from housemaids, who found the process irksome. The windows of the kitchen offices, except the kitchen itself and the servants' hall, were too high up and too narrow to be a means of ingress or egress for anybody. The house was old, long and low, only two storied, and as rambling as country houses often are which have been altered and enlarged from time to time to suit the fancy or convenience of the owner of the moment, and not as part of an architect's design.

Kate declared that she had seen nothing out of the ordinary that morning before she went into the library, except that the lamps had burnt out and expired, making a smell "that stank to heaven." She did not put it in those words, but quite as graphically. That had startled her, directly she

came downstairs—no—(hastily) directly she came into the hall.

No, the shutters and bolts were all right, they were just the same as usual; no signs of their having been opened. She had heard nothing, no one moving about the house—well, she had not, a rustle under the stairs among the garden chairs and the tennis things that were kept there, was not "someone moving about"—so Kate reasoned with herself.

Pratt did not bother her as much as she had expected. She had had a vision of him as she had once seen him cross-examining a very dirty, weeping little boy, who had stolen a rabbit from the fishmonger in the village, but vowed he had taken it from a snare in his father's garden. Pratt had held him firmly by the ear, while the wretched child struggled and kicked and prevaricated in vain.

This time he was very polite, and only asked each servant in turn where they had been at the hour when Kate had found "the body," and whether they had heard unusual sounds of any kind during the night. He seemed satisfied with their answers. No one had been disturbed during the night. Patch, the yard dog, had not barked.

Then he turned to Dr. Calgarrie. "Can you tell Mr. Preston, sir; I ought to see if anything has been stolen. I can't go to his safe or the pantry cupboards without his leave. He has the key of the safe."

Calgarrie was one of the not very numerous tribe of doctors who would almost prefer to let a

patient die than tell him a disagreeable truth. "I should like to wait for Mr. Anthony," he said.

"I ought not to wait, sir," said Pratt, his honest, sunburnt countenance full of official importance. "I shall have to let the inspector know, and the coroner, as soon as I can."

Calgarrie grunted. He was not at all sure how Robert Preston would be affected by this news, in two ways, his strong temper and his weak heart. The one had an adverse effect on the other. At all events, if Anthony were there he would bear the brunt.

Pratt followed the doctor upstairs. "One moment, sir." He looked down to see if anyone else were coming. "I don't doubt but it is a burglary, and the fellow hopped it after seeing Miss Wentworth—did her in, in self-defence, I take it. Mr. Preston was the last of the household to see her alive. . . . I'd like to know exactly what time he went to bed, and that . . . I need not see him, sir, if you'll ask him. I mean if you think he'd be upset at seeing me."

Calgarrie looked at the man thoughtfully, his experience of Pratt did not lead him to expect much delicacy of feeling from the policeman. He was rather surprised. There was certainly something about old Bob Preston that called out a curious personal devotion from the people about him. After all Pratt was a fellow churchwarden at the little church of Greystones, a member of the cricket club which Preston helped to support, and of the

Horticultural Society of which Preston was President. The policeman evidently wanted to show his respect, admiration and sympathy for a man whom he considered great.

"Wait outside, then, will you?" said Calgarrie, "I'll call you if I want you. You've told Mrs. Crutcher what to do about Miss Wentworth. Does she want help?"

"It is all right, sir, Mrs. Wilkins will help."

Calgarrie wished that someone could help him. He told Pratt to fetch Wilkins, and to have some brandy ready. If the old fellow fainted it might be hard to bring him round.

Robert Preston was one of the fortunate people who belong to a happier and more simple age than the present day. He was the son of a bishop who had been famous for his great intellect and learning, and Robert himself had been blessed with no mean intellectual capacity and a memory that might have rivalled Macaulay's own. His impatient, nervous temperament had probably been the only reason why he had not achieved greater pre-eminence in his profession; "dependable but difficult," as someone had described him, but as someone else had described the Landors of Staffordshire, he came of a race that was polished, high-spirited and long-lived, and he had had a sufficiently distinguished career at Eton and Oxford, and afterwards at the Parliamentary Bar.

He had retired from his profession some twenty years before the date of Eleanor Wentworth's death, when he came to live at Greystones, the

family house left to him by his grandfather. His marriage had been very happy, because his wife had been a woman not only of great personal charm, but of a remarkably fine and unusual character, whose loss not many years before had left him heart-broken. Nothing in this world has yet been discovered that tends to the formation of upright and honourable character like the type of happy atmosphere and dependable background that the Robert Prestons had given to their children.

Two of their sons had distinguished themselves before they were killed in the war, and two survived; Anthony, who was a lecturer in history at Oxford, and a Fellow of his College, was married, and had three children; and Oliver, still unmarried, who was a Commander in the Navy, and at that time held an appointment at the submarine depôt at Plymouth. Both Robert's daughters had married well and happily. It seemed that his lot had been cast in pleasant places, though he had had his share of loss and sorrow.

Anything like the sordid and ugly publicity of the ordeal now before him had never previously touched him, so thought his doctor, because a murder in your house, and there could be no doubt that it was a murder, leads always to a most unwelcome notoriety. The cheap press adores sensation, and a murder is obviously sensational. Calgarrie was fond of his old friend, and would have given much to save him from this unexpected trial.

Pratt and Wilkins were coming up the back-stairs, and Calgarrie hardened his heart, knocked

at the familiar bedroom door, and opened it. Robert was sitting up in bed, reading, and on any other occasion his face of sheer astonishment as the doctor walked in, would have made Calgarrie laugh.

"Hullo, Calgarrie! What brings you here so early? I did not send for you; never felt better in my life."

"No, it is not you," said the doctor obscurely. "I am glad you are feeling well. Look here, it is no good beating about the bush. I was sent for to see Miss Eleanor——"

"Eleanor! She was perfectly well last night. I did think that she ate rather a lot of that beastly ginger for dessert. She has a way of eating sometimes as if she had forgotten what she was doing."

"Just so," said Calgarrie, "but it was not her digestion. Let me feel your pulse."

"Are you trying to break something to me? Oh, damn it, man, you have a face a yard long. Get it out in God's name! What is the matter with Eleanor?"

Calgarrie's little round button of a face puckered up comically. Really he did not know how to begin. It seemed like a nightmare. Here was Robert Preston, aged eighty, well-preserved, not very tall, but a good figure of a man, if a bit thicker than he used to be, with his marvellous fresh complexion that a girl might have envied, his white hair —what there was of it—his neat moustache and mutton-chop whiskers that belonged to Victorian

days, and were so completely typical and characteristic. For years his children had laughed at his entire disregard of modern fashion, but no one could possibly imagine Robert Preston without his whiskers. How was Calgarrie to tell this man, so posed and set in his life and habits, honourable and dignified, although with certain eccentricities that made him human and lovable, how could anyone—even his doctor and old friend—tell him that a murder had been committed in his own house?

Calgarrie found himself wondering inconsequently if any man with mutton-chop whiskers, blatantly and unashamedly Victorian, had ever been told such a thing?

Meanwhile Robert Preston regarded his doctor with his very blue eyes, wishing that the fellow would not be such a confounded ass. He was very fond of his niece, Eleanor, but he was quite able to bear it if he heard that she had collywobbles, or measles, or whatever it was.

"Don't stand there goggling at me," he almost shouted; "if it is anything catching, we must take precautions."

"God forbid!" said poor Calgarrie, "an epidemic of murder would be indeed a calamity!"

He had spoken his thought, and it was out—the murder was out. Robert looked at the doctor's familiar face, and his jaw dropped a little in spite of himself. After all, he was an old man. He pulled himself together, and sat very upright against his pillows. "Now Calgarrie, what the devil are you saying? I'll go bail that Eleanor has not murdered

anyone. What are you driving at? I don't want figures of speech at this hour in the morning."

"It is no figure of speech," Calgarrie said sadly; "it is no joke to have to tell you, Preston, that Miss Eleanor has been found dead—murdered—here in your house, in the library. Presumably it happened last night, after you went to bed."

He took Robert's hand and felt his pulse again, as if mechanically. Robert seemed stunned. He sat staring at Calgarrie.

"Eleanor," he said at last, "Eleanor? But why should anyone want to murder Eleanor? Why should anyone think it worth while to murder Eleanor, in my house, Calgarrie, in my house?"

His voice shook, there were tears in his eyes. "Good God, Calgarrie, who has done this thing? You are sure about it—certain—that she is dead? It is impossible!

"I can't understand it," he said after a moment, and he fixed his eyes again on the doctor, through the tears in them they were still remarkably blue and piercing. "I must get up . . . a murder in my house . . . have you sent for the police?"

"You need not get up," said Calgarrie, "it is not necessary, not a bit. I have seen to everything. But there are some formalities. Pratt is here, and I am afraid that he ought to see you, because—"

"Upon my word," Robert Preston turned round angrily, "who is doing all these things? Who sent for you—and for Pratt—without asking me? It is my house, as you said."

"The servants found her," Calgarrie answered,

"Wilkins telephoned to me and to Pratt, also to Anthony, I believe."

"Has Pratt found anything incriminating? Has he questioned the servants? Are there signs that anyone broke into the house last night?"

He had begun to ask questions in a normal manner. The justice of the peace was coming to the fore.

"You had better send Pratt up to me," his hand shook as he smoothed his moustache, but Calgarrie was reassured. The old fellow was standing the shock very well.

Pratt came in and stood near the door, he had taken off his helmet, and was fiddling with a note-book in his hand.

"I'm very sorry, sir," he began, "very sorry for you, sir, and Miss Wentworth—you have my sympathy, sir."

"Thank you, Pratt. I'm sure you are sorry. Tell me what you have found out, so far."

Robert's voice shook, in spite of his iron self-control, his determined reserve, so pre-eminently British and Victorian. Calgarrie knew that his patient's stiff lip was costing him a good deal, but he admired the old man's courage and ready assumption of authority. "Tell me——" The master of the house was not going to wait for Pratt to question him.

"Not much, sir, no signs that the house had been broke into—no broken windows or locks, nothing stolen, so far."

"Have you looked in the pantry? Oh, and there's

the safe in the study. You'll want the key for that?"

"Yes, sir, that's what I wanted to ask you. Also—if you could tell me one or two things, sir, what time did you go to bed when you left Miss Wentworth in the library?"

"Time? Oh, I go to bed early, about ten o'clock. She said she had some writing to do, and that she would put out the lamps."

"I suppose, sir, you have never known her faint, or turn giddy or anything?"

"Not to my knowledge. She don't look particularly strong, but I should say she was wiry, gets through a lot, one way and another. Why do you think she might faint?"

"There's just a chance she might have knocked her head on the table—if she fell down in a faint."

"Knocked her head? Good God, man, you don't mean that—she was killed by a knock on the head?"

"That's true," said Calgarrie, "as far as I can tell at present, without further examination—but we measured carefully. I don't think it can have been the table. Also she bled a bit, you'd have seen signs on the table."

"Good God!" said Robert Preston again; the horror was coming home to him. "My poor Eleanor, she must have been terribly frightened! What a foul brute the scoundrel must have been—to give her a blow on the head—Eleanor! In the library—and we all slept calmly through it—never heard a sound, not a blessed sound."

"He mayn't have meant to kill her—those

chaps," Pratt observed, twisting his notebook with some agitation, as if he had been accused himself, "they're rough, they knock their own wives about, it don't seem to hurt the women much, but Miss Eleanor—of course—a lady——"

Calgarrie thought of the look of unutterable terror in her face when they found her, poor thing, poor woman! There had been some charm and a sort of distinction about Eleanor Wentworth, he considered, with her well-shaped head, her grey shingled hair, her still slight figure, and the brown eyes that had been her best feature, though nowadays she would disfigure herself with those great tortoiseshell spectacles. By the bye, he had not seen her spectacles, what had happened to them? She could not have been writing without them?

"Is that all you want to know, Pratt?"

"Yes, sir, except—did you put out the lamp on the stairs?"

"Yes, I always do, I leave only a small lamp alight on the chest in the hall for her."

"She's sat up before, then?"

"Often enough, if she has been alone with me. You know she has an appointment at the Foreign Office—research work. She often has writing to do when she comes here."

"May I have the key, sir, I don't think there's anything more——"

"I shall have to come with you—there's a list somewhere—I don't know myself exactly what there is in the safe."

"You must have breakfast first. I insist," said

Calgarrie, "we can tell if anyone has tampered with the safe."

But the list was found, and there were no signs that anyone had tampered with anything. The silver in the pantry, the finer silver and other valuables in the safe, were all intact. The intruder had apparently taken nothing but Eleanor's life.

When Anthony Preston arrived that afternoon, he brought a detective from Scotland Yard with him.

CHAPTER II

The Coroner's Jury returned a verdict of "Murder, by a person or persons unknown," but though the local press was muzzled by Anthony Preston's skilful manipulations, it was quite well-known in the neighbourhood that the "gentleman" who was staying at Greystones was Detective-Sergeant Margetson, who was in charge of the case. The "person or persons unknown" had to be found. The Chief Constable and the police inspector at Calverstoke both urged that it was important to let him stay in the house, as it was rather isolated, and the nearest inn at which he could put up was some way off.

Margetson was quite obviously and palpably a Jew, the handsome and refined type of Jew, tall, thin as a rail, with the crafty and vivacious eyes of his race, a delicate complexion, grey hair and pointed beard; he looked much more like a distinguished civil servant, or a highly successful physician with all the letters in the alphabet after his name, than a detective from Scotland Yard.

Anthony, who was short, dark, quick, apt to be impulsive, but shrewd and capable, not in the least dreamy or unworldly, as the learned professor is sometimes supposed to be, found Margetson

supremely interesting, but, also, sometimes supremely aggravating, because he declared that he worked on the latest scientific lines, and insisted that his first step must be to label and classify the outrage that had cost Eleanor Wentworth's life. Margetson's theory was that all crime could be labelled and classified, but he was not content on this occasion with Pratt's simple definition of the frightened burglar who had "done her in" as an act of self-defence.

"I am pretty well satisfied, Mr. Preston," he said to Anthony after a few days, "that no one could have got into the house or out of it without leaving some trace. The fact that part of the staff sleeps out of the house, as well as the gardeners, makes an extra safeguard. They would have noticed anything unusual when they came in in the morning, and no one could possibly have got out until Kate unbolted the back door, because they could not have bolted it again."

"Anyone could get *in* before the shutters are closed. I have walked in at the drawing-room window and out of the front door hundreds of times without a soul in the house knowing anything about it. My younger brother, Oliver, as a midshipman arrived here unexpectedly one morning very early. We all thought that his ship had sailed the night before. He got under the dining-room table, and no one in the house knew that he was there until he put his head out, and looked at my father with an impudent grin, in the middle of family prayers. He said that he wanted to see if

he could stop my father in the middle of a prayer, but he failed. Without pause or hesitation the prayer went on. In fact the whole ceremony went on to the end without a pause. I don't think anyone else could see Oliver. The boy was bitterly disappointed. He hoped that my father would at all events say, ' Good God ! ' and suppose that Oliver had broken his leave."

Margetson laughed. " Crime, especially murder," he said, " is generally to be attributed to one of three motives only, fear, anger, or greed, and the greatest of these is fear. Anger is more common than you would suppose. It attacks the most unlikely people, and it is therefore the most difficult motive to trace. A fellow loses his temper and his self-control and hits harder than he knows. Perhaps he is a man of fine poise, who has never become unbalanced before. You generally find it in the very young or very old, often for some entirely inadequate reason. I had a case once of a man who killed his wife with no better excuse than that she was unpunctual. It had been a source of irritation to him very often—it is to a good many men, who have perhaps married late in life, when their habits were formed."

" My wife and daughters are almost punctually unpunctual," laughed Anthony, " I don't see myself murdering any of them for it."

Margetson looked at him. " You married young, all that is part of your life, you can't imagine yourself without it. You have, as it were, grown up to it. But this fellow had not. He was

devoted to his wife, who was much younger than he was, and he spoilt her and taught himself to be patient. But the constant effort culminated at last, he was always being irritated, without showing it. She let him down badly on some occasion, I forget what it was, it seemed inadequate enough, though important to him at the time, but he suddenly took her, shook her, shouted at her and flung her away from him. She knocked her head against the jamb of the door, and died. That is what made me think of it now. He hid what had happened for a long time. It was said to be an accident, and he was not known to have been in the house when she died. Eventually it came out that he was there, I had him arrested, and he confessed. The jury brought it in as murder all right."

"I should have called it justifiable homicide," said Anthony. "I shall tell my wife that story next time I have to take a car at great expense because she has missed a train. But go on, what about our friend the supposed burglar, what was his motive—greed?"

"Oh no, it was fear. He thought Miss Wentworth would give the alarm, probably did not know how difficult it would be to give an alarm, with only three other women and an old man in the house. Servants always sleep like the dead, and Mr. Preston is a bit deaf. The burglar—if there was one—only wanted to silence Miss Wentworth, to keep her off the bell, or the telephone, while he got away, might not have known that he had killed her. But I don't think there was a burglar."

"How about greed?"

"In this case? I don't see how it comes in. She did not wear expensive jewellery, no pearls —good or bad. Lord! the crimes that women commit to get pearls, you'd never think, and they are supposed to be emblems of innocence. She was not the sort of woman, I take it, to be blackmailed. She did not look like it, anyhow. I have been up to her flat in London, and I've interviewed the officials where she was working. I gather that she was a clever woman, rather fastidious, conscientious, very industrious, an unusual talent, I take it, for her particular job. They seemed to be a good deal put about to find a successor for her."

"She has been at it for a long time, and it is not only the medical 'research worker' who must be born not made."

"Can you tell me anything about her life as a younger woman—love affairs—anything of that kind?"

Anthony was silent for a moment. "To tell you the truth——"

"Don't," said Margetson, "that always precedes a lie."

Anthony laughed, a little ruefully: "It is quite true though that I don't know! My mother knew, I believe, all about her, but she never confided in me, and naturally I have only heard hints and rumours. She never talked much about herself. Her work was what they call 'confidential,' and that headed her off from talking shop. Thank

goodness! Most women who have any kind of job can't talk of anything else."

He paused, feeling suddenly a sort of remorse, because he did know so little about her, how she amused herself, where she went in her "off time," who were her friends. "She was very self-contained," he said slowly, "and she never groused, though she led a lonely sort of life. She lived with her brother, who was invalided after the war, until he died, some years ago. She was absolutely wrapped up in him, adored him, I do know that. I imagine that she never got over his loss, though she did not talk much about it. Latterly she has been in very good spirits. She was naturally a gay sort of soul, lighthearted, easily amused, but that may have been partly a mask. My mother was very fond of her, and I think she was very fond of us all, especially perhaps of my father and my naughty children."

"Hints and rumours," said Margetson, "she had affairs then?"

Anthony frowned at him, what a ghoul the man was! But it was advisable to tell him something to divert his imagination from more highly coloured affairs. "Years ago. She was engaged to some fellow when she was very young, and broke it off, I don't know why. There was talk of a married man, who got in the way somehow. He had a jealous wife, I believe. I imagine that Eleanor had rather a thin time of it. She was perhaps a bit of a flirt, but not the sort to throw her cap over the mill for anyone; too conscientious and too fond of

her own people. They belonged to a generation that would have thought it an indelible disgrace."

"But there was a jealous wife?" Margetson looked very hopeful. Anthony wanted to punch his head. These beasts of detectives, they throve on scandal!

"A long time ago. The man has been dead for years. I do know that. You need not imagine that the wife has murdered Eleanor! I daresay she is dead, too. How does jealousy 'cruel as the grave,' come into your category of motives?"

"A mixture of fear and greed—some anger in it as well. It is one of the strongest and most deadly motives for every kind of crime. You are quite right there."

"How do you bring in the *crime passionel* that we hear so much about in France, like that fellow Landru, wasn't it, who murdered quite a collection of women, and burned them in his stove, if I remember right?"

"Greed—lust—what is lust but greed? I think Landru wanted the women's money, too."

Anthony sighed. "Beastly sordid," he said. "But you talk like a doctor trying to prove that there are only three causes of disease. I don't believe in a common causative factor, if that is the right term, for crime or disease either."

"Why not?" asked Margetson. "Science simplifies things very much, when you get down to bed-rock. Heredity, drink, dirt, there you have the three common causes of disease."

" How about climate, contagion, sex, sanitation, senility ? Oh, I could go on *ad infinitum*."

" Senility is not a disease, just human nature, so is sex. In your sense it is only a literary conception of a gruesome nature, invented by Freud. The others are sins against heredity. Climate does not hurt the native-born. Dirt accounts for contagion. Sanitation is only required when we give up the life for which we were intended. Man was not born to live in crowds. Most things in nature go in threes, like father, mother, child ; root, branch and fruit."

" Then you think that the Christian doctrine of the Trinity has a scientific basis ? "

" I should not be surprised," said Margetson, and Anthony wondered if he were a practising Jew.

" Mr. Preston is a bit hot-tempered, isn't he ? " asked the detective, as if he wanted to change the subject.

" Nervous temperament, slightly irritable under contradiction, likes his own way and does not suffer fools gladly. Perhaps my mother, dear thing, spoilt him. He has certainly what you might call a reserve of pugnacity."

" Miss Wentworth," Margetson continued, " was interested in archives, records, family history and so on, wasn't she ? I gathered that that had been her line before she joined the learned professors who edit Foreign Office papers for publication."

" Yes, she worked on county histories, and such-like."

" Mr. Preston mentioned your family papers

yesterday ; said he did not know who would deal with them now. I suppose he meant since Miss Wentworth's death ? "

" Yes. There is a clause in his will by which certain papers were left to her, for publication or not, at her discretion. She has written a good deal, novels, memoirs, and so on. My father wished her to have our papers. They go back a long way."

" Was she completely in agreement with him about the proposed publication ? He said something—rather fretful, I thought—about it yesterday."

Anthony looked astonished. Why was Margetson showing so much interest in the family archives ? " Did he ? They used to talk about it at one time, not so much lately. I think the subject really rather bored my father. Eleanor worked at the papers, and read contemporary histories and memoirs. I don't think my father has ever taken any very great interest in them."

" I am not so sure," said Margetson, " the servants say that lately he and Miss Wentworth had several heated discussions and arguments about the family papers. Dawson, the housemaid, heard your father's voice, speaking angrily, in the library, on the night that Miss Wentworth died."

" Dawson does not think, by any chance, that my father knocked Eleanor on the head, does she ? " laughed Anthony.

" It may surprise you, but Dawson is not the only person who has that suspicion."

Anthony stared at the detective for a moment

as if he thought the man must have taken leave of his senses, and then roared with laughter. "Oh, look here," he said, "this is most awfully funny! Don't be offended, but it is such a mare's nest! My father! My father, who hates wasps like the devil, but has never been known to kill one of them in his life! He could not hurt a fly, much less Eleanor. You don't understand my father. He may be a bit autocratic and impatient—he can't stand Dawson by the way; I think it is her voice, she is under notice to go—but he is the most tender-hearted soul alive. I daresay he did argue with Eleanor, and she could be obstinate—determined, if you like that word better—but he would not touch her in anger. Good Lord! You don't know how completely unthinkable it is." Anthony began to laugh again. "Don't look so solemn, man," he said to Margetson, whose face could assume the impassiveness of a stone image. "Really, I can't take it seriously. I feel very deeply that my poor cousin's death is a tragedy, and a mystery, but this idea of yours is simply comic. If you knew my father, you would know how comic it is."

Margetson smiled, rather perfunctorily. "Perhaps it is," he said. "I can understand that you might think so. Some murders are comic, if you look at them that way—like choking a cat with cream. Do you know why they should disagree about the papers? Wilkins seems to have realized, as well as Dawson, that his master was distinctly vexed about something or other. Perhaps you would

rather not tell me? I don't want to probe into your family secrets, if you have any, but it might help me to get to the bottom of this affair. That cousin of yours, the clergyman, Mr. Evan Day, who was here for the funeral, said something, and Miss Wentworth's will referred to notes on the family history that she had made."

"Evan Day? Oh, he is a portentous prig, always poking his nose into matters that don't concern him. He has written a bit, too, mostly tosh about his travels, but I think he was rather jealous because Eleanor was to have the handling of the papers. There is nothing in them of the slightest interest to anyone outside the family."

"No skeletons in your cupboards? Most people who can trace back a few generations have some bones rattling somewhere."

"I should say we had all been dully prosperous and unadventurously successful. One or two of my ancestors reached a more or less outstanding eminence, and some of my collaterals too got to the top of the tree in their particular professions. Most of them were blameless folk, sufficiently successful, not very exciting. They married respectably, and so on. We can't brag about our grand and noble skeletons like the man in Hardy's *Tess*."

"Not much to quarrel about? Who was your very beautiful great-grandmother, whose picture is in the dining-room, and I think some miniatures of her family in the drawing-room?"

"No scandals about her, except that Blücher kissed her when he met her in England, after

Waterloo. She lived in Germany in her youth, and he presumed on the fact that he had known her as a child. Unpleasant for her, I should think, to be embraced by a snuffy, beery German. Oh, by the bye, there is a legend that her father was a descendant by the left hand of that vagabond, Charles Edward, the Pretender."

"You don't call that a scandal?"

"Oh, no! There are so many similar legends. To be even a left-handed scion of royalty is quite respectable, rather aristocratic and honourable, if the story is old enough. Look at the Fitz-Clarences, to go no further back than that!"

"How about your great-aunt Jane?" asked Margetson, unexpectedly.

"How do you know that I had a great-aunt Jane?" Anthony riposted quickly, but he paused the fraction of a moment before he spoke, and Margetson knew it.

'Dawson and Wilkins—back-stair chit-chat. They both seem to be aware that you have, or had, a great-aunt Jane."

"Brutes!" said Anthony, "but why shouldn't I? My great-aunt Jane married a clergyman, Peter Colquhoun. They led admirable and blameless lives, at his living in Somersetshire."

Margetson raised his eyebrows. "Mr. Preston would not be concerned to defend their fair fame?"

"I can't imagine why anyone should attack it. I will ask my father, if you like, whether he had a heated discussion of any kind with Eleanor. My father is rather emphatic, you know, but

Eleanor was quite accustomed to that. Dawson, whose line I take it is vinegar not violence, might be misled. When did she hear this argument?"

"I understand that she and Wilkins, in the absence of the parlourmaid, waited at dinner on the night of the tragedy. The argument began at dinner, and was continued afterwards. Wilkins took coffee into the library, and noticed that his master appeared to be vexed, and that Miss Wentworth did not seem to agree with him. He was standing before the fire, and "laying down the law rather fierce," according to Wilkins. I should have described it as a clash of wills, not violent perhaps, but a clash!"

"Mere sound and fury signifying nothing," said Anthony, grinning; "haven't I known it from my earliest years? He starts like that, but he generally comes round in the end—it takes time though," he added, significantly, remembering many things. "I must own, all the same, that on a great many subjects, especially if they are not personal matters, my father has the soundest judgment of anyone I know. I will ask him and tell you what he says about any disagreement that he had with Eleanor. I can assure you beforehand that it won't be 'as deep as a well, or as wide as a church-door.'"

Margetson consented, and that evening, after dinner, when Wilkins took away the coffee cups, he said that he had business letters to write, and followed the man out of the room.

It must be explained that the drawing-room at

Greystones had two doors, a big bow window at one end, and a very large window in the wall opposite the fireplace. The doors were on each side of the fireplace, one of them opened into the hall, the other into the library where Eleanor had met her fate. The entrance to the library for some reason was double, there were two doors with a small recess, probably once a cupboard, between them. A detective has no scruples about his methods of obtaining information. Something in Anthony's manner, added to the information he already held, had convinced Margetson that there was more to be said about "Great-aunt Jane" than the record of a smug and blameless life in Somersetshire or any other shire. He therefore decided to insinuate himself into the space between those two doors, in order to hear the conversation between Anthony and his father. If anyone came into the library he could just walk on into the drawing-room with some excuse for returning; if Anthony suddenly went into the library there would be time to escape. But the library had remained shut up since that tragic evening. Before dinner Margetson had taken the precaution to open the drawing-room door, a bare crack, but enough to make it possible for voices to be heard.

He was in his hiding-place in time for Anthony's opening gambit, as he would probably have called it himself. "What are you going to do about the family archives, Father, now——"

"Don't hurry me, my dear fellow, don't hurry me. I must think it over."

"Of course; but I have heard from Mordaunt, Eleanor's solicitor, who is also the executor of her will. It seems that she left some notes about the family locked up in a despatch box, and said that they were to be given to whoever you settled was to have the original papers. Naturally, Mordaunt wants to know what he is to do with the box. She left all her own manuscripts and things to a Mrs. Danvers, a literary friend of her own. Mordaunt supposes that you won't want this particular box to go to the Danvers."

"Certainly not. I consider that was a very proper provision in Eleanor's will, though I did not know that she had made any notes."

There was a pause, then Anthony went on, "For goodness' sake, don't let Evan Day have them. He will be off at a tangent over the Colquhoun-Harper business."

("Ah!" thought Margetson, "you did not deceive me, my friend. There is a 'Colquhoun business.'")

"Evan Day, that blundering ass? Good God, no! Why should he have anything to do with it?"

"Well, Father, there's the fund, that Julius Colquhoun left for you to administer. Isn't Evan one of the trustees?"

"Certainly not. His father was, originally, but not Evan, Providence be praised!"

"What will happen to that fund, eventually?"

"There are provisions. The trust will continue

as long as there are Harpers of the same family to profit by it."

("Sir Julius Colquhoun!" thought the detective, "he was very well-known at the criminal bar. I thought the name was familiar. Oh, yes, I remember the story in some legal memoirs, there was a *cause célèbre* about a fellow called Harper; some fraud. Colquhoun was counsel for the defence and lost the case. Why should he have made any provision for the Harper family?")

"Did Eleanor know about all that?" Anthony asked.

"To tell you the truth, I was very much annoyed with Eleanor about it. It is a matter of the most poignant regret to me now, that I was seriously angry with her. She thought that she had discovered something extraordinary, and really impossible, about the matter; said it was in those papers that Aunt Jane left to me. I own—ah—hum—I own that I have never gone through them very carefully, but Eleanor's ideas were perfectly absurd, preposterous and ridiculous. The fact is that she seems to have made the acquaintance of young Harper, that fellow's grandson, and took an interest in him. She had discovered a regular mare's nest about Julius, which I don't believe for a moment, and wanted my consent to publish the whole story in order to clear Harper's memory. Preposterous, I tell you, just like a woman, though I thought better of Eleanor. Generally speaking she was no fool."

"What did she think she had found out?"

"Upon my word, Anthony, I don't know why I should tell you. It is no concern of yours."

"It may be, if you leave the archives to me, and that is about the best thing you can do."

"I shall burn them," said Robert Preston decidedly.

"You can't burn Eleanor's notes."

("That fellow is no fool either," thought the detective.)

"Confound Eleanor's notes! No, I am not going to say that of the dead. *De mortuis* . . ."

"Don't!" said Anthony, "go on confounding Eleanor's notes. Did you say that to her? If anyone quotes that beastly tag about me when I am dead, I—I'll haunt them."

"I was angrier than I have been for years—not since you, Anthony, made such a fool of yourself in 1910."

"My dear sir, what a memory you have! I seem to have dim recollections of some—annoyance—very capably and ably expressed by you, even with eloquence—at a later date than that. But I want to know what Eleanor found out. I shall tell Mordaunt that I am going to be your residuary legatee, and that he can send her box to me."

"I shall cut you out of my will altogether," said his father complacently.

"All right. I shall have read the notes long before you have made up your mind to send for Blakeney to alter your testamentary dispositions—and I shall tell him to go on making silly little legal objections to everything you say. By that

time we shall have consented together again—probably to burn the whole caboodle. You know you are dying to tell me."

"Nothing of the kind. It is all pure flapdoodle, mere surmise. Do you remember the Harper case? Why should you—years before you were born. Joseph Harper was a clerk in a solicitor's office in Gray's Inn Square, Edwards & Matthews, very good old firm. Julius had a great many briefs from them. Well, Harper absconded with a deed box, which contained not only the Irchester papers, but the Irchester pearls. It was Lady Irchester's particular box, and when she sent for it on some occasion, it was sealed up, and being unusually valuable, Harper, who was what you call a confidential clerk, was told to take it to her in a hansom and get a receipt. He did not turn up again that day, and meanwhile Irchester himself arrived at Gray's Inn, full of fire and fury, murmuring threats against all and sundry. There was a court ball or something that night, and he wanted his wife to wear the pearls, and some diamonds and things that were in the box. Harper did not appear, which looked bad, but he was eventually caught, some months later, on his way back from Paris."

"Had he really taken the box?"

"Irchester prosecuted, and Julius was briefed by the firm to defend Harper. Harper's defence was very shaky, he said he had left the box at the Irchesters' saw Lady Irchester herself, and she gave him a receipt. On his way back to Gray's Inn he was knocked down by a hansom, so he said, and

carried off to Guy's Hospital, where he remained for weeks, knowing nothing. No receipt or other papers was found on him ; he said that he had lost his memory, and was eventually taken to Paris by one of the Guy's doctors, to consult a brain specialist, who treated him, and he eventually recovered his memory and came home, but was arrested at Dover. By that time the pearl necklace had been discovered at a jeweller's in Paris. The diamonds were never found—broken up, I conclude."

"How about the doctor's evidence ?"

"It seemed very vague. Eleanor said that Harper's luck was out. They did not know his name at Guy's because he could not tell them when he was there, and the doctor who took him over to Paris died suddenly. They had the French doctor's evidence taken on commission; but could not prove Harper's identity. Julius made a great speech in Harper's defence, one of his best, it was always remembered in the legal world, but he lost the case. Harper went to prison and died there. When Julius died it was found that for years he had been supporting the Harper family, and he left a very considerable sum in trust for them. Of course there was considerable scandal, young Harper was said to be Julius' son, and all that kind of thing. Julius' mother, my aunt Jane, could not bear you to mention Harper's name."

"That is all very well. I have heard as much as that before, and so has Evan Day, but what did Eleanor discover ?"

"A perfect mare's nest, I am convinced, but a pretty scandal if true. Her story was that Lady Irchester had the jewels, sold them, and also received the insurance money for them. They were highly insured, which was unusual in those days. Eleanor declared that Lady Irchester's receipt was among the papers."

"Then Julius knew, and—lost the case—on purpose!" Anthony whistled.

"You are as bad as Eleanor! There was a lot more, according to her. Julius was apparently the woman's lover. . . ."

"The woman—Lady Irchester?"

"Yes. That was the bottom of it. Eleanor was almost eloquent. I had never before heard her use such language. She had no words bad enough for either of them. For a woman of small means Eleanor had a remarkable contempt for money. She could not realize the temptation for some people. She said that Harper was knocked down on purpose, and the receipt stolen from his pocket. She did not say that Julius was an accessory before the fact, but that he certainly knew all about it afterwards. She thought that Julius had some sort of a conscience and did his best to save Harper, but could not do it without incriminating her ladyship, and would not do that. After all he was a great lawyer—and old Peter Colquhoun's son—and he made this provision for the Harper family as a sop to his own conscience, I suppose."

"Why on earth did Julius keep the papers?"

"God knows—or perhaps the devil—a bit of

sentiment ; there were all the Irchester woman's letters to him and his to her apparently. Julius died rather suddenly, you know, and his mother took over all his papers, as residuary legatee. I don't suppose she ever looked at them. They came to me in a tin deed-box, which looked as if it had never been unlocked."

"What did Eleanor want you to do ?"

"Publish the story. She said that everyone who could be hurt by it was dead, the Irchesters and the Colquhouns. Julius himself never married, as you know, and the Irchester title died out, they had no children. The one person to be benefited is this young Patrick Harper, the grandson. It seems that the scandal lives, in his sort of coterie. He wanted to marry some girl and her father refused to allow it because he was the grandson of a convict."

"I should like to meet that father, and ask him how he does it," said Anthony. "Do you flatter yourself that I shall be able to prevent Molly and Eve from marrying convicts if they have a taste that way, let alone the grandsons of convicts ?"

"Pish !" said the grandfather of Molly and Eve, "I have no patience with such nonsense."

"It seems to me that it would be a pity to rake up so sad—and bad—a story, though I feel for Harper."

"That is just what Eleanor would not see. She was full of abstract ideas about justice and honour and the man's good name—all that sort of thing. The family honour and Julius' good name

did not affect her at all—she said, if I remember right, that she would not touch Julius with a pair of tongs—simply because she knew this Harper boy and liked him."

"It would be jolly hard to prove, unless the papers are very damning."

"I told her so," said Robert, wearily. "I told her so, more than once. In fact I said that nothing would induce me to consent to publication of any kind."

"How long have you had the papers?"

"Since Aunt Jane's death, about forty years ago, I suppose. She survived Julius only by a year or two."

"Suppose this Harper boy dies 'without issue,' as they say in genealogies, who gets the money?"

"It comes back to the family. I get it, or you get it. Harper is quite young, probably your children would get it."

Anthony whistled again. "It would be rather a bad show-up for you, to publish *now*."

"I told Eleanor so, I told her so. It would make no difference about the money. But she would not listen, she said I could prove that I had never looked at the blessed papers."

"And that would be hard to prove, too," Anthony observed. "I am beginning to think that we had better burn the lot, without looking at them. I say, isn't it time to go to bed?"

Margetson escaped, wondering, "What will that good son tell me to-morrow? I wish I

were as sure of salvation as I am that the old chap knew all about those papers forty years ago—all the same, why didn't he burn them then ? "

The door into the hall from the library opened at right angles to a glass door which led into the garden, and was always shuttered up at night as carefully as the windows, but it was yet too early for the shutters, and as Margetson came out, he was met by a blast of cold air, a small figure in a leather coat, a crash to awaken the dead, and a clattering of apparently innumerable heavy ironshod weapons on his feet.

Margetson was not easily rattled, but his feet were hurt, and he seized the leather-clad intruder with no gentle hand. " Now then," he said, " hands up ! What are you doing here ? "

His captive stood still and giggled joyfully. " Oh," she said—it was a girl, without a hat and her hair was cut like a boy's, but still there was no doubt about it—a girl. " Oh, who are you ? You did frighten me. I was trying to show them how a burglar might get in without anyone hearing——"

" Without anyone hearing——" Anthony's voice broke in impatiently. " Row enough to waken the seven sleepers ! Really, Molly ! What are you doing with my golf-clubs all over the place at this time of night ? . . . It is all right, Wilkins, only Miss Molly, go and tell Mr. Preston, will you ? "

A sound of scampering feet and smothered laughter followed, as the younger servants, who were

just behind Wilkins, went back to their own quarters. The noise had filled them with hope for more excitement, but it was "only Miss Molly."

Anthony began to pick up his scattered clubs, grumbling all the time. "Why—what the—who —really—Molly, this time of night? Who came with you?"

"No one, Daddy dear. Why should they? I had lunch at Salisbury with the Dean, and supper with Aunt Peggy, and came on here. I left the car by the gate, because I wanted to show you that I could get into the house without anyone hearing me."

"Without anyone hearing you? My poor deluded child!"

"It was my fault for not leaving your clubs in the car. I thought if it rained they would get rusty, and you'd want me to clean them. I did not expect to find anyone near this door. We have not been introduced to each other, but I never thought anyone would say "hands up" to me. Isn't it glorious?"

"Mr. Margetson—my daughter," said Anthony. "With your usual acumen you have probably guessed the relationship."

"With my usual acumen," said Margetson, "I heard a car stop near the gate, and came down to see who was arriving. It is not so easy to get into the house unheard, Miss Preston, when people are on the watch."

Molly sighed. "I never thought of that. Where is Grandpapa?"

" Just going to bed." Mr. Preston was lighting his candle, which stood on the oak chest in the hall behind them. " I suppose the maids know what you want, Molly ? " He seemed to be completely unmoved by this tumultuous arrival.

Molly flung her arms round his neck. "Don't fash yourself, darling. I can sleep, with one eye open, anywhere. It struck me that you might want someone else to sympathize with you now. Daddy is quite a good comforter for a bit, but you may be glad of a little feminine intuition by this time ? "

Her grandfather returned her hug. " You are quite right. Bless you, Molly, good-night, child."

He went slowly upstairs with his candle.

" Feminine intuition, upon my word ! " Anthony was now sitting on the floor, examining his scattered clubs. " Your feminine intuition has broken my best brassy."

" But, Daddy," Molly said to him, as they went out a few minutes later, to garage her car, and she put her hand through his arm, " I don't believe that your old detective heard me arrive from upstairs. I am perfectly certain he came out of the library, shutting that door when I opened the other." Anthony looked startled. " Naturally, the library is suspect—after what happened there."

" Oh, Daddy, you are Victorian sometimes ! Why can't you say ' after Eleanor was killed there ' ? "

" Yes, ducky," said her father, " and why can't you say that feminine curiosity brought you here, not feminine intuition ? "

CHAPTER III

Anthony produced a very fair and only slightly bowdlerized version of the "Colquhoun business" for Margetson's information. But Margetson was quite aware of the points that were bowdlerized. He knew perfectly well that the weak part of the story was the length of time that those papers, proving the innocence of a man who had been wrongfully sentenced, had been in Robert Preston's hands without being examined.

As usual, to a man of his profession, such weakness was a sign of guilt, not of innocence, and he wondered "how much of the fund stuck to the old gentleman's fingers in passing through them."

All the same, he asked Anthony only one apparently casual question. "Then Miss Wentworth did make him angry that night?"

"He said that he was angry, more so than he had been for years. I begged leave to differ from him there. We have all suffered from his 'reasonable annoyance,' as he calls it, quite frequently." Anthony laughed again.

"Did he ever thrash you or your brothers as boys?"

"No, I don't think so. I can't remember that he ever did. He may have spanked us when young,

not half enough, probably. You may think that I have inherited a weakness about the proper discipline of my children. But we should have heard a great deal more about it if we had landed his clubs and broken two of them as Molly did with mine last night. My remembrance is that he only lashed us with his tongue, but that drove us to bed, weeping. I can't drive my children to bed weeping, they are much more likely to have that effect on me.

Margetson smiled. "I have an idea, all the same, that you might be an unpleasant customer at close quarters if you lost your temper. I have no doubt now that Mr. Preston did lose his temper that night with Miss Wentworth."

"He could not be half so unpleasant as I shall be if you harp too much on that string. It is really too ridiculous. You are probably losing sight of important clues in other directions."

Margetson smiled enigmatically, with his best air of Buddha-like abstraction and withdrawal, but asked shortly afterwards if he could be driven into Calverstoke, the nearest town, that afternoon. Unfortunately he could not drive himself, because he had had his right wrist wounded in the war, and it was still stiff.

Anthony said that probably Molly could drive him, and went to look for his daughter. He found her, as he expected, sampling the remaining apples in the fruit room in the orchard.

"Walk up the road with me, Molly, I want some feminine intuition out of earshot."

Molly did not ask whose earshot; she followed him, the pockets of her frieze coat bulging slightly. Anthony took an apple out of one of them in an absent-minded way and ate it as they walked.

"You must drive friend Margetson into Calverstoke this afternoon. He is going to see the Chief Constable about his intention to arrest your innocent grandparent on a charge of murder.'

"Lawk!" said Molly, "these pockets don't hold much. You need not eat all my apples—what am I to do? Upset Mr. Margetson in a ditch and leave him there?"

"No," said her father, "though the vision is tempting, we don't want to have two of the family hanged for murder. We must think of something better than that. I must get the old boy out of the way."

"I bet you a thousand to one against, dead cert."

"I wish you would give up talking like a schoolboy. You will be nineteen next month, if we all live long enough, and you are getting too old for it. I am sure you will never marry if you talk like that. Do show a little of the feminine intuition that you mentioned last night. What shall I do with him?"

"Do with who? Grandpa, or Mr. the detective? You don't suppose that anyone cares how I talk, do you?"

"Your grandfather. Think, Molly, while you are driving Margetson to Calverstoke—I can't hope that he will care how you talk, though a

detective son-in-law would be a variety in the family—I must persuade my father to flee from justice. Whither shall he go?"

"Could Wilkins drive him up to Oxford? I don't want to marry a detective, thank you, even to save Grandpa!"

"What is the good of Oxford? You can't disguise him as an undergraduate."

"I am sure we ought not to be funny. Mummy would think us awful, with poor dear Gran about to be arrested on a capital charge—oh—don't laugh—a major charge then—Daddy! Don't be a beast!"

Anthony came to earth again, and took his girl's arm. "It is really serious," he said, "I can't allow my father to be arrested and taken before the Bench at Calverstoke. We might laugh and they might laugh, but on the evidence before them, they'd have to commit him for trial. Margetson is a most consummate ass, but it is because he has had all his experience among wrong 'uns. He is like Napoleon, always on the look-out for the base motive. He can't believe that anyone is ever, even somehow, good. He has never met commonplace, ordinary, God-fearing people like us. He thinks because Grandpa was angry and grumbled at Eleanor that he then naturally bashed her on the head. Margetson can't see how idiotically inconceivable it is. The only people he knows do that kind of thing."

"But is that all? No one saw Grandpa bashing poor Eleanor? I mean, no one imagined they saw it, did they?"

"No, but unluckily, Margetson talked to that acid spinster, Dawson, and she seems to have drawn on her imagination to the extent of hearing my father speak in an excited way to Eleanor, and then Dawson says she heard something fall with a bit of a crash, and then silence. That was when she was shutting the garden door. Wilkins told me all this, and also that he himself had owned, out of sheer lack of imagination, just as you or I might have owned, from the impossibility to us of a wrong construction, that 'Mr. Preston was laying down the law something fierce,' when he took in the coffee after dinner. His evidence will back up Dawson. Everyone knows that he worships my father, and would not give evidence against him if he could help it. Margetson has got hold of a cock-and-bull story, but he has also, or thinks he has, two witnesses. I heard him say something on the telephone. First, he asked for a man to be sent on duty while he is out this afternoon, and then he went on in code, a very easy code, I learnt it during the war . . ."

"In code! Oh, the darling! It is just like a cinema. First he said 'hands up!' to me, and then he telephoned in code! It is like a John Buchan. I am thrilled to the marrow! Will he take a revolver in the car this afternoon?"

"Don't be such a cuckoo, Molly, you talk like a boy scout. Can't you help me a little?"

"Do you really want help?" Molly disengaged her arm and put it round her father's neck. "Shall I contrive a puncture, or miss the way, and get to

Calverstoke too late for the warrant or whatever it is to be given to him? Is there a close time for warrants, like marriage licences?"

"Humph! What do you know about marriage licences? Take your arm away, Molly, the baker's cart is coming round the corner, he'll think you are Kate with her young man, and there will be a scandal in the village."

"Has Kate a young man? How exciting for the village! It may distract their attention from Grandpapa—I'll show them!"

Molly's affection took a somewhat strangulating form, against which her father protested in vain. "Oh," she said at last, "don't let us play the fool! This is a matter of life and death. Let's sit on the gate and talk seriously."

"That is my desire," said Anthony piously. "It does not so much matter what you do with Margetson; the question is, what am I to do with your grandfather and Margetson's substitute? Margetson won't go till the *ersatz* fellow comes."

"I know!" cried Molly. "I have it! Send Wilkins with Mr. Margetson, and let me stay with you. I'll go over to Aunt Peg this morning and tell her she must hide Grandpa—in the church I think—isn't a church a sanctuary? Anyhow Gran must stay there until Margetson comes back and sends a search party. I shall be at the Rectory, all alone and innocent. They will be baffled——" Molly's voice became hollow. "You must somehow get the police on to a wrong track. Then,

at dead of night, I will drive Grandpa to—to—where shall we go ?"

"You'll have to make him consent to go at all, first. Let me see, you had better not go to London —too obvious. . . . I have it ! You can go to Uncle Oliver's at Devonport. He can hide Gran in somebody's submarine. That might answer all right."

"Very well ! I can go to Aunt Peggy now ; Mr. Margetson must think I have gone to lunch with her, and then he won't be suspicious. Grandpa might walk through the park at Stanbury this afternoon, and I'll pick him up there."

They both got off the gate, with set and earnest faces. It was very hard not to treat the whole matter as a joke, and yet it was no joke.

"Grandpapa will certainly say it is one of your wild-cat schemes, Daddy, and I can't somehow see him in a submarine."

"Better than in the dock at a police court," said Anthony. "You might as well come and help me to persuade him."

They advanced upon Robert in his study, shutting the door very carefully behind them, with the air of conspirators.

"Father," said Anthony, "I am afraid that you will have to make a move."

"Make a move ? What are you talking about ? What sort of move ?"

"The fact is, that blighted bounder, Margetson——"

"Not at all, I think him most gentlemanly,

so much so that it is an insulting word to use about him. He does not deserve it."

"Well, anyhow, he has taken the most preposterous and ridiculous idea into his head about you. It is a serious matter. He is going into Calverstoke this afternoon to inform Eltham, the Chief Constable, that he proposes to arrest you on the charge of having murdered Eleanor."

Robert Preston looked at his son and looked at Molly. He turned a deeper pink than usual, then his face broke into smiles, as if he could not help it. "Upon my word!" he said, "what damnable cheek!"

Anthony murmured "*Deo Gratias*" under his breath to Molly, who said, "What?"

"What does the fellow propose to do?"

"Take you into Calverstoke before the Bench. You know what that means, remands in custody until the police are ready, and then you will be committed for trial at the next assizes. I suppose they'd have to keep you in quod until June. You can't grant bail on a murder charge, can you?"

"Of course not. Bring me before the Bench? Does the fellow realize that I am a J.P. myself?"

"It would not make any difference if you were the Lord Chancellor. You can't be arrested for debt as an M.P. but a J.P. has no particular privileges that I know of."

"But—look here, Anthony, is this some wild-cat idea of yours?"

Molly giggled feebly. "I told you so!"

"My dear father! Am I likely to suggest

anything of the kind to you unless it were a matter of the most serious and really vital importance ? "

" You must have managed Margetson very badly. How the devil has he got such an idea into his head ? Arrest me—at my age—a magistrate myself—it is an outrage—I tell you—an outrage ! "

" I quite agree," said Anthony, heartily.

" Darling Grandpa," cried Molly, " we are going to save you ! "

" Save me ? Pray don't be so perfectly absurd ! Why should I be saved ? A man in this country is innocent until he is proved guilty. It will take that confounded Jew all his time to prove me guilty ! "

" It seems that Dawson heard you ragging Eleanor, and thought the worst. Margetson has enough to give him a start, must arrest somebody, you know, or Scotland Yard will ask the reason why. Meanwhile you will be kept in quod at Calverstoke, and it will be beastly uncomfortable and not at all good for you—that is what we must prevent. It only requires a small effort, a little *finesse*—"

" A small effort ! I don't see myself making any effort at all. Why should I ? It is intolerable that at my age I should be turned out of my own house in this way. All this is a terrible shock to me, Anthony. Poor dear Eleanor's horrible death was a crushing blow—and now this—tomfoolery—on the top of it."

" All we want you to do, Gran, dear, is to go and pay a visit to Uncle Oliver at Devonport. I'll

drive you down, only we must get away without letting that silly detective know that we have gone."

"Molly is going to settle the business with the Beaumonts at Stanbury. Peggy Beaumont will see you through. You must go into the church and sit in the vestry. It is rather a nice vestry, there is an arm-chair and a stove. She will send you some food. Meanwhile I will lay a false scent for the police. When the coast is clear, Molly will pick you up and drive you—hell for leather—down to Devonport."

"You can't go hell for leather in my Jane, she's only an Austin seven," grumbled Molly.

"Dreadful uncomfortable thing," growled Robert, "can we get to Devonport to-night?"

"Depends when we get away," said Molly, "it mightn't be safe for you to sleep at Aunt Peggy's."

"Do you mean that you propose to drive all night in that beastly open car, in a howling draught, with your knees up to your chin?"

"It isn't so bad as all that," urged Molly, while the lines of perplexity deepened in Anthony's forehead. How is a man to cheat justice—or the semblance of justice—when he cannot bear to alter the settled habits of his life by one hair's breadth? He knew his father. That he should be accused of murder disturbed him remarkably little, but the idea of change, discomfort, a shake out of the acceptably lined rut in which he lived, disturbed him a great deal.

"Perhaps it might not be necessary if I could have

a talk with Margetson? He always seems to be a reasonable sort of fellow. I might get this maggot out of his head. Anyhow, why can't I have the Standard, my own car? It is much more comfortable."

"Because—by Jove, why shouldn't you? Wilkins can drive Margetson into Calverstoke in Molly's *flivver*. She can drive you in the Standard. She has driven it before, lots of times."

"Do you mean—to tell me—that that—fellow—was going to be driven in *my* car by *my* chauffeur to get a warrant for *my* arrest?"

"That's the ticket," said Anthony, who was apt when nervous to relapse into the youthful slang affected by his family, "it does seem a bit thick."

"I wish you would not talk like a boy scout——"

Anthony winked at Molly, who doubled up with laughter, and had to explain why, but the atmosphere lightened. For some reason his success in commandeering his own car encouraged Robert. He was still uncertain whether the whole thing was not part of a sort of "prisoner complex" in Anthony, who had been a prisoner in Germany during the war, and had spent most of his time there planning the escape that he eventually achieved successfully. However, Robert consented that Wilkins should pack his suit-case and entered into the plans for his own "escape" with many grumbles, but a kind of zest.

"I am very much obliged to you, I am sure," he said to Molly, with the sudden charm that made him beloved, "for offering to drive me.

You must wear a thick coat. It is still cold at night."

But later he asked Anthony again, "What does this detective fellow think he has to go upon? Surely it would be the merest farce to have me up before my fellow magistrates? They will only suppose that Margetson has a bee in his bonnet!"

"It is that blasted woman, Dawson," said Anthony. "She has had her knife into you ever since she was given warning, and Wilkins, or some of them, let out that you could not stand her whiny-piny voice."

"Dear me, dear me, how difficult servants are nowadays! I am a bit deaf you know, and I never can hear what she says."

"It is all because you will go on having lamps, and won't have electric light fitted in the house," said Anthony, who never missed a chance to bring in that old bone of contention between himself and his father.

"I suppose you will say next that Dawson thinks I refused to have electric light because I intended to murder Eleanor? Any stick will do to beat that dog. What does the woman say really?"

"That she heard you talking loudly and angrily to Eleanor, that Eleanor exclaimed, 'Oh, don't!' that something then fell with a sort of crash, and you said, 'My God!' and after that there was silence."

"You know what my argument with Eleanor was about. I own that I thought her mistaken, and became, I think reasonably, annoyed. The

crash that Dawson heard was the small table near the sofa that had on it the books and papers that Eleanor wanted me to look at. In a moment of exasperation—the thing was always confoundedly rickety, I hate small tables—I put down one of the books rather impatiently and the whole thing went over. I daresay Eleanor did say, 'Oh, don't!' but I thought it was 'Take care!' Very likely I did say 'Good God!' or something of the kind. After that I sat down, smoked my pipe and read my book, and Eleanor picked up the *débris*. That was all that occurred. We did not return to the detestable subject, and I don't think we talked much more before I went to bed, when Eleanor said that she would sit up and write a bit. She had no ill-feeling, I am sure, and I had not either. We knew each other well enough to disagree. I must own that I have never before seen Eleanor so damnably obstinate."

"Poor Eleanor!" said Molly.

"I am sorry that I did not urge her to go to bed, instead of sitting up over that beastly writing. She was a great deal too conscientious. By the bye, Anthony, what became of all those papers? She had an envelope full of notes, official stuff, I think, and there were some of the family archives, as you call them, on that little table."

"Oh!" said Anthony, as if his father's question suddenly shed a fresh light on the subject. "I have not thought about them. I must ask Margetson. No doubt the police took possession."

He began to understand that Margetson held a

better hand than he had realized, also that the washing of family dirty linen in court must be avoided, at any cost, although the linen in question belonged to a former generation, and a distant branch of the family.

"*Cherchez la femme!*" thought Anthony, with a somewhat wry smile to himself. "I don't mean Dawson, but all this has happened because that minx Lady Irchester, who never had anything to do with any of us, outran the constable, stole her own jewels, and got round Julius Colquhoun. I can see that Margetson thinks we are all tarred with the same brush. It seems rather hard luck that my father, who is as innocent as a babe unborn—I am not sure that he was born at the time when I come to think of it—should have to suffer. I feel certain that he did not know in the least what the papers were that he was giving to Eleanor."

. . . . . .

That afternoon Margetson drove off to Calverstoke in the little two-seater car with Wilkins. If he were sorry not to have the bonny Molly to drive him, he did not say so. He knew that she had gone to her aunt's at Stanbury, about twenty miles away, and proposed to bring Mrs. Beaumont —her mother's sister who had married the rector of Stanbury—back with her to tea. That was why, ostensibly, she had taken the more comfortable car. Mr. Preston talked all through luncheon of the fact that though there were two cars in his stables, there was not one available for himself, if he wanted it.

"But you don't want it," said Anthony irritably; he seemed to be in a rather goaded frame of mind. "You know you hate motoring, and you don't want to go anywhere."

"If you suffered from your feet as I do——" began his father.

"Oh, do shut up, I hate talking about feet at luncheon."

Mr. Preston returned to his grievance about the absent cars. Margetson understood perfectly that it was being conveyed to him that he ought not to have asked to be taken to Calverstoke. He did not start until the *ersatz*, as Anthony called him, arrived, a man called Ritchie, obviously only a policeman in plain clothes.

Robert Preston retired as usual to his study. He generally smoked and read, or wrote—or slept—there in the afternoon. Anthony met Ritchie, showed him the house and garden, and left him in the housekeeper's room, with a pipe and a newspaper. Evidently he expected nothing more.

He said afterwards that out of the window he had seen Mr. Preston walking in the garden during the afternoon. When Margetson returned, soon after five o'clock, the *ersatz* once more mounted his motor-cycle and rode away. Margetson had his tea alone in the hall. Mr. Preston and Mr. Anthony had gone out, he was told by Kate.

Two hours later they had not come in, and for Mr. Preston this was so unusual that Margetson began to get uneasy. He had no idea that Anthony had suspected the reason for his errand to Calver-

stoke, which he had mentioned casually as a mere matter of routine, to make a report to the chief inspector there, and also to enquire for himself about anything further that the police might have discovered. As a matter of fact he had arranged to bring Robert Preston before three magistrates at Calverstoke on Monday, as the next day was Sunday, on the charge of having murdered Eleanor Wentworth. The police evidence would be purely formal; they would only ask for the accused man to be remanded in custody.

Margetson was more human than Anthony supposed; he liked old Robert Preston, appreciated Anthony, and was charmed by Molly, but his duty was plain if grim. He was also a little haunted and puzzled by Wilkins' description of the look of terror in Eleanor's eyes, when she had first been found. Wilkins had talked of nothing else all the way to Calverstoke. "I can't think what she saw, sir, and I can't bear to think of the poor lady being that frightened. She had a pale look always, as if she lived too much indoors, delicate-like, but she was not nervous. She did not drive herself, but she'd take a bit of a shave in the motor quite calm, not rattled like Mr. Preston. He don't like motoring, not really, too quick for him, I think, but Miss Eleanor never seemed to mind, not to show, anyhow."

It might have astonished Margetson if he had known how near to a "shave" he was himself. Wilkins was much tempted to upset him in a ditch, or to run out of petrol in a lonely lane, and take

hours to get any more. Wilkins had every excuse, as he was not driving his "own" car. Anthony had had to take Wilkins into his confidence, on account of the suit-case that had to be prepared and other matters, and Wilkins was extremely angry with the detective. "Such a pack of nonsense as I never heard," was his opinion of the evidence against his master.

When the dressing-bell rang, and there was still no sign of any of the Prestons, Margetson woke up to the fact that their absence could hardly be accidental. He telephoned to the police at Calverstoke, and spoke very severely of Ritchie to his superiors. Then he sent for Pratt from the village, told the astonished man that he intended to arrest Mr. Preston, and started once more with Wilkins in Molly's little car for Stanbury.

He arrived as the Beaumonts and Molly were sitting down to dinner, very calmly. He had ascertained that the Standard car and Mr. Beaumont's little Morris Oxford were both in the coach-house. Margetson had left word where he was to be found, and almost before he had explained his errand to Mr. Beaumont, who only looked bewildered, he was rung up by Pratt, passing on a message from Calverstoke. Ritchie, by the merest chance, had seen Mr. Preston get out of the car that could be hired in Greystones village, at Starbeck, the nearest station to Greystones. Ritchie had jumped off his bicycle, and hurled himself into the station, only in time to see Mr. Preston get into the train, which Ritchie at once boarded by a dash into the guard's

van. He had eventually telephoned from London, to say that after all Mr. Preston had given him the slip. It was a fairly quick train that stopped only once after Starbeck, at Dorchester, before it arrived at Waterloo, but Ritchie had not seen Mr. Preston get out at that station, and certainly not at Waterloo. He had warned the guard and telephoned to the police inspector at Waterloo from Dorchester where the train stopped for some minutes. Ritchie said that Mr. Preston was apparently alone ; he had not seen Mr. Anthony.

Margetson asked to see Molly, but she told him nothing. She was not sure if her father might have had to go to Oxford that afternoon. He had had a letter at breakfast, and had mumbled something about a Fellows' Meeting next day, so he might have gone. Her grandfather had said nothing about going to London, but she knew that his feet sometimes bothered him, and his chiropodist lived in London. He generally went to her aunt, his daughter, Mrs. Charlton, if he had to go up to Town. He *had* grumbled a good bit at both cars being requisitioned, but had himself suggested that Molly should bring the Beaumonts back to tea. Eventually she had found that they expected people for tennis, the first game that year, so she had decided to play, and stay the night. She had telephoned to Greystones. Perhaps her grandfather had then decided that he would go to London.

After all, he did decide such things for himself.

Charles Beaumont, the typical country clergyman of the present day, thin, tall, exceedingly conscienti-

ous, a good honest fellow, not overburdened with either brains or money, puzzled because his parishioners were easy neither to lead nor to drive, not countryman enough to enter into their ways or their thoughts, but really a saint in the making, was shrewd enough to hustle the detective.

"Do you want petrol or anything?" he asked. "I have some spare tins if you do. I suppose you will go to London, though I don't know why it matters where Mr. Preston is, but no doubt you have reasons."

"Do you think that Miss Wentworth's burglar is after him too?" asked Mrs. Beaumont. She was a lively soul, the antithesis of her husband, quick, clever, kind-hearted, a little superficial, but sometimes witty enough. Her eyes twinkled as she asked the question.

"You will understand," said Margetson, a trifle heavily, "that he will be wanted to give evidence, if Miss Wentworth's murderer is discovered. The police ought to be able to produce him at any moment if necessary."

Molly put her finger in her mouth, and hung her head like a child. "I suppose if the burglar, or the murderer, was looking for anything at Greystones that he has not found yet, it would be a good chance for him to-night, with everyone away? Do you think I ought to go back?"

"The very last thing you ought to do, you precious foolish child," cried Mrs. Beaumont, who had no children of her own, and therefore adored her sister's family.

"No," said Margetson, "your presence, Miss Molly, would be only an embarrassment to the police."

"I should love to embarrass the police!" cried Molly, with one of her infectious bursts of laughter; even Margetson smiled.

"I daresay they would enjoy it," he observed, "and you must do as you like. I am going at once to Starbeck to make enquiries, possibly I shall go on to London."

He bowed to the two ladies, as a sort of farewell gesture, but then turned to Mr. Beaumont again. "Do you think that the station-master at Starbeck would have recognised Mr. Preston?"

"Oh, certainly." Mr. Beaumont held the door open for his departing guest. "Everyone in this neighbourhood knows him very well. But surely his servants could tell you where he has gone?"

"Wilkins was out with me. I gathered that one of the gardeners had fetched the car from the village for Mr. Preston. They all suppose that he has gone to his daughter, Mrs. Charlton, for the night; but at the same time they all thought she was out of Town. I have her address."

Mr. Beaumont offered to drive to Starbeck with him, to make enquiries of the station-master, but Molly's little car only held two, and Margetson drove off alone with Wilkins. The detective was puzzled, and would no doubt have been surprised if, as the sound of his motor died away in the distance, he could have seen Mrs. Beaumont and Molly

clasp each other ecstatically and dance round the room.

"Now, Molly," said her aunt, "off you go! Uncle Oliver will meet you at Longbolton. Don't go further than that. You must come straight back here. That man won't let the grass grow under his feet. Directly he discovers that your grandfather is not at the Charltons', he will begin to search here again. I do hope he does not know of Oliver's existence?"

"Oh, yes, he does," said Molly. "Uncle Oliver was at Eleanor's funeral, only a few weeks ago. But still, Mr. Margetson may not think of him."

"Who has gone to London disguised as your grandfather? Or was Ritchie's message all camouflage?"

"It may have been Daddy. I know he got out some things from the dressing-up cupboard before I started. Will Uncle Charles go and dig out Grandpapa from the vestry? I will take the car round to the churchyard gate."

"I do hope I am going to embarrass the police!" she called over her shoulder to her aunt, as she ran out of the room.

CHAPTER IV

Mrs. Beaumont was quite right; before luncheon time the next day, which was Sunday, Margetson was back at Stanbury, and hearing that all the family were at church, he went into the coach-house and examined the two cars that stood there. He thought they were both rather suspiciously clean, and he was perfectly right. In the end Mrs. Beaumont had been troubled because her niece would be out alone most of the night, and Charles Beaumont had therefore started with Robert and Molly on their drive to Longbolton on the South Downs, where Oliver Preston had met his father, and took him off to an hotel at Lyme Regis for the night, before he went on to Devonport the next day. Oliver seemed to be far more concerned that either Anthony or Molly were about his father's state of health and fatigue, for which no doubt Robert was grateful, and at such moments there was something endearing in his manner of recognising that people were doing their best for him. He and Oliver went off together very happily.

Molly and Charles returned to Stanbury by about two o'clock and went to bed. Mrs. Beaumont spent the rest of the night—or rather morning—

in cleaning the Standard car, because it had rained, and the car was splashed all over. There had been no rain the preceding day. She felt that she was living "in a Buchan," as Molly would have put it, enjoyed herself enormously, and appeared at church for the early service as fresh as a rose.

How was Margetson to know all that? He did know that it had rained all night, and that both the cars were meticulously clean. Regretfully he came to the conclusion that the old gentleman had escaped successfully.

The night before Margetson had made Wilkins drive him "hell for leather," although it was in the Austin, all the way to Town, over 100 miles, and he had gone to the Charltons' house very early the next morning to find there only a caretaker; a caretaker full of the experienced Londoner's easily roused suspicions. She was sure that Margetson was "after no good," especially as he had arrived with the milk—a most ungodly hour on a Sunday morning.

Nevertheless she knew Wilkins, and when the chauffeur gloomily assured her that Mr. Margetson was genuinely concerned only to find Mr. Preston, she allowed him to come in, but followed him everywhere, with such shrill asseverations that no one should go into any part of the house for which she was responsible without her, that Margetson felt certain that anyone in hiding must have been warned in good time. The house certainly seemed very empty, all shut up and dark, except the basement. Somehow, Margetson could not imagine Robert

Preston, fastidious and irritable, hobnobbing with an elderly caretaker of respectable, but unprepossessing, appearance in the basement!

He had telephoned to the inspector at Calverstoke very late the night before, when he took the protesting Wilkins to an hotel, but the police had heard no further news. Wilkins had to garage the car in the next street, away from the hotel, but Margetson did not follow him there, or he might have been surprised to hear Wilkins make cryptic remarks to somebody or other on the garage telephone, to the effect that he and Mr. Margetson were staying at Bailey's Hotel for the night. He might have been informing only his wife, but he also seemed to hear news that made him smile, and come out looking in a better temper than he had shown since he started for Calverstoke that morning. The next day, when they went to the Charltons' house he had relapsed into his grumpy mood, and refused to rattle the car back at the pace they had come up the day before. Eventually they arrived at Stanbury before one o'clock.

Margetson met the Beaumonts and Molly after church, and explained that he had had no luck in London. Mrs. Beaumont was sympathetic, and offered him lunch; Charles looked bored, and vanished directly the meal was over. "He must rest," his wife explained, "before Sunday School this afternoon."

She and Molly seemed to be anxious to talk and ask questions, but they volunteered no information, and although any detective who is worth his salt

has a sort of sixth sense that warns him when he ought to be suspicious, he did not yet feel that he could ask to search the Beaumonts' house. He felt convinced that somehow or other Mr. Preston would "double back," and was not reassured by Charles Beaumont's sulky manner, which only meant if he had known it, that the poor man could not stand late nights. After returning at two o'clock in the morning, the unfortunate Rector of Stanbury had to be up and in church by seven. By the end of the morning service, he felt as if he would give all he possessed to sleep for an hour, and instead found himself constrained to "do the civil to the detective fellow."

Margetson asked Molly if her father had gone back to Oxford, and she said, "I suppose so," rather vaguely, but offered to ring up and ask, and as she spoke the telephone bell rang in the hall, "I daresay that is Daddy," she said, and went to answer it.

She returned, laughing, "Grandpapa wants to know when I am going back to Greystones. He is at home again."

"At home——" Margetson stared at her. "I must ask you to come there with me, please, Miss Preston. There is some hanky-panky here. I can't be sent from pillar to post like this."

"No?" said Molly, and her eyes were very demure. "Of course I will come, if you like. We can leave Jane here, and Wilkins can drive us in the Standard, or I will drive if he is too tired."

For a moment Mrs. Beaumont looked as if she

were offended by the detective's dictatorial manner, but all she said was, "Surely the travelling about was your own idea, Mr. Margetson? Must you go now? I rather wanted my niece to stay till to-morrow."

They looked—glared, Molly said afterwards—at each other for a moment, then Margetson said stiffly, "I am accustomed to meet with more consideration on the part of my clients. My duty is to discover Miss Wentworth's murderer. Every difficulty seems to be put in my way by those whose duty—and inclination, if I may say so—should be to give me every facility."

"I gave you my Jane—and Grandpapa gave you Wilkins. Isn't that enough? Now you want me, and I've said I'll come." Molly's voice was the complaining voice of a chidden child.

Mrs. Beaumont still bristled a little, "I can't think why we should be accused of putting difficulties in your way. It is not our business if Mr. Preston leaves home unexpectedly. You will probably find that he left a message for you, that Kate or someone forgot to deliver. After all, he can do what he likes, I suppose, and so can my niece. I don't recognise your right to dictate to her. I shall come too, if she goes with you."

"By all means," said Margetson, whose momentary loss of poise, it could hardly be called loss of temper, had been caused by a sudden suspicion that they were laughing at him, "pulling his leg." All the same he had wanted the opportunity to cross-

examine Molly by herself. There was still something that he could not quite fathom, and Mrs. Beaumont was a little distracting. She was volatile, talkative; he did not want her company in the least. At the same time, if he arrested Mr. Preston and took him to Calverstoke on Monday, it would be as well for Molly to have someone with her. At bottom, in spite of his firm faith in the general corruption of human nature in everyone but a few specially favoured officials of Scotland Yard, Margetson was not a bad fellow. It was not his business to be kind, but he would not go out of his way to be unkind to a child like Molly.

"By all means," he repeated to Mrs. Beaumont, "only I must ask you to come at once. I shall be glad to get back to Greystones as soon as possible."

"May we put on our hats?" asked Molly meekly, and the aunt and niece went off together. Margetson could not know that they again danced together, wordlessly, at the top of the stairs.

"That came off all right," said Mrs. Beaumont, when she was safely in her own room, "but you forgot to say that Grandpapa was not very well."

"Oh, bother!" said Molly, "but I will, in the car."

"Be careful," Mrs. Beaumont warned her.

"I wonder what is the matter with Gran," Molly said, after they had driven some way in silence. Margetson was sitting in front with Wilkins, but

he had put down the glass screen at his back before they started. She knew that he meant to hear everything they said.

"The matter with him? Why should he have anything the matter with him?"

"Oh, I forgot to tell you. It was Kate who rang me up to ask when I was coming, you know. She said that Grandpapa got back rather late last night with a bad cold on him, and that he was staying in bed. That is probably why he told her to send for me. He can't bear to be alone when he is ill. She said that Dr. Calgarrie had seen him and was keeping him in bed, but was not alarmed."

"Did Kate say where he had been yesterday?"

"Oh, no, I did not ask her."

"I hope it is not going to be one of his really bad colds," said Mrs. Beaumont, with unaffected anxiety in her voice.

"Kate said she wished Mr. Margetson would come back, because Pratt was very cross and disagreeable, always ticking them off if they said a word."

Mrs. Beaumont laughed. "He must have his work cut out. They are not exactly Trappists."

Margetson heard it all, and found himself wondering. He would not be able to take Mr. Preston to Calverstoke even under arrest, if the doctor intervened. Well—he would get a couple of extra plain-clothes men on duty if necessary, to see that the old man did not get away again unobserved.

They found Robert Preston in bed, probably

not seriously ill, but unusually quiet, Margetson thought, and very hoarse when he spoke.

Mrs. Beaumont observed how unexpectedly patient he was, and Molly exclaimed, "You don't know Grandpapa when he is ill, cherubs and martyrs aren't in it. He is always terribly chastened by pain. We cheer up when he begins to shed his halo and his sprouting wings. When he says 'Good God, what is this muck?' to his Allen & Hanbury, or whatever it is, Mummy and I always feel that we can go and play golf in peace."

"Charles is rather peevish when he is ill," said Charles's wife, as if it were a superior attitude on her husband's part, "but then he thinks it his duty to be perfectly equable when he is well."

"He is terribly angelic when he plays golf," said Molly. "I always long to say to him :

> "He taught them *bother*, likewise *blow*,
> Of wickedness the germs,
> But golfers know the sweet relief
> That lives in awful terms!"

They prattled on, they were always prattling, or so it seemed to Margetson. One or other or both of them were always in the room when he saw Mr. Preston; he felt as if he were in a bee-hive, with bees—very amiable bees—always buzzing round him.

But on the third day in the afternoon Margetson found the patient up and dressed, and after some dodging of the female part of the family, contrived

to serve the summons on him, to appear before the Bench at Calverstoke on Thursday. Robert was reading by the light of one small lamp. He looked up from his book. "I knew you had this card up your sleeve, my good fellow, you were never more mistaken in your life."

Margetson warned him that anything he said could be used in evidence against him.

"All right," said Robert. "Order the car when you like, I shall be ready, only get out of my room now, and for heaven's sake shut the door after you."

Margetson left him; shrugging his shoulders. These Prestons always contrived to turn the tables on him. It was not he who ought to have felt small, but the man who was virtually his prisoner.

The next day three of Bob Preston's very good friends and neighbours, Lord Thorell, who was in the chair, Sir John Elgin, and young Partridge, a gentleman farmer of the neighbourhood, fellow magistrates, and fellow members of boards and councils all over the county, found that they were being asked to commit their respected friend and colleague for trial on a charge of murder. Not one of the three believed that he was guilty, not one of the three knew how to evade committing him for trial.

They had the coroner's verdict before them, so that it was unnecessary to call witnesses to certify the death of Miss Wentworth, and Margetson's statement was, on the face of it, unanswerable. He was plausible, sensible, even sympathetic.

There was a quarrel, nobody denied it, Mr. Preston himself acknowledged that he had quarrelled with his niece over a family matter that concerned Mr. Preston himself very closely. The police had the papers involved. They all knew that Mr. Preston had a hasty temper—slight chuckles, repressed, from the Bench—Miss Wentworth had gone too far, no doubt, she was aggravating, irritating, probably inconsiderate. It was possible that her uncle meant only to throw the book at her as a relief to his feelings, not really to injure her. At that moment the prisoner interrupted, "God bless my soul!—throw a book at her—what book? I never threw any book at her—only on to a table."

"Wait a bit, sir," broke in young Partridge, irrepressibly, "let the fellow go on."

"Why do you say that Mr. Preston threw a book at her?" asked the Chairman, Lord Thorell, very majestic, with his white hair and tufted eyebrows, but spoilt by a pink nose and a twitching mouth. He was a fine shot and a good landlord, but didn't all the rest of them know that Bob Preston, in a characteristically irrepressible moment had said that "the good God who made rabbits might have made someone who looked stupider than Thorell, but evidently had not thought it worth while."

Margetson's answer was clear and definite. "The book—which Mr. Preston says he threw on a table—was found under the table near the head of the corpse, stained with her blood."

"I don't believe a word of it,' began the

prisoner, testily, but was again silenced. His solicitor, who was in court, came to the rescue. "There is nothing for us to say at the present stage," he remarked. "My client pleads 'not guilty,' and I understand that the police ask for a remand until they are ready with their evidence."

The Bench hesitated again. Mr. Blakeney, the solicitor, said he supposed that it was no use, even under the special circumstances, his client's advanced age and uncertain health, and so on, to ask for bail?

Thorell said hastily, "Oh, of course," but the clerk of the court muttered something, and the other two justices looked uncomfortable. "I don't think we can—on a murder charge?" said Sir James Elgin, who had been a county court judge himself. "We should like to, of course," said young Partridge.

Margetson thought his prisoner still extraordinarily quiet; he had made very few characteristic outbursts, and he had been obstinately silent in the car, driving from Greystones, with Margetson and an inspector from Calverstoke. Pratt shed tears and obstinately refused to accompany them, though he and Dr. Calgarrie were both in court in case they were wanted. Mr. Preston was still hoarse after his cold, he turned up his coat-collar, pulled his hat over his eyes, put his hands in his pockets, and apparently went to sleep. Margetson thought of all this, and wondered if the old man were really feeling ill, chastened by pain, as Molly had said.

Robert Preston got up from the chair they had

given him in the dock ; he seemed to think that it was all settled. "Well, good-bye, you fellows," he said to the men who were his judges, "I shan't bear you a grudge."

Probably he said good-bye to them just like that when he had been sitting on their side of the court, but at that moment he stumbled a little, his left hand shot out and caught at the ledge in front of him, and then Margetson began to feel that the whole concern was a nightmare, not only Gilbertian from the intimate terms of Bench and prisoner. Young Partridge flung himself out of his seat, dashed across the court and caught the prisoner's hand with a sort of roar : "Look here ! Look here ! What's this ? What's this ? This is *Anthony's hand.* . . ."

Then even the bare semblance of a court fell to pieces, they were all crowding round Partridge, and Partridge was holding the prisoner's left hand by the wrist, and keeping off the blows aimed at him by the prisoner's right hand. "Damn you, Anthony, don't be an ass ! I can't mistake your hand. This is the finger you had blown off at Givenchy when you fielded some bits of shell that came your way——"

"It isn't, you fool, shut up ! How could it be, if it was blown off ? "

But unmistakably there it was, a hand with the two top joints of the third finger missing !

Margetson's face was more like a stone image than ever, but inwardly he was like a ravening wolf. How had he allowed himself to be tricked ? Of

course if a man were in bed, you did not notice particularly if he kept his hands under the bedclothes, and if he had a bad cold, you expected him to be hoarse, and not very talkative. Who could be talkative with those chattering women—damn that Mrs. Beaumont ! It was a put up job on her part of course. She had never allowed anyone to concentrate, to think, or even to look much at the invalid. The room had always been rather dark, as well as full of people; suddenly Margetson realized that, and understood why he had not missed Robert Preston's remarkably blue eyes. Oh, confound it ! He could see now that Anthony's make-up was wonderfully good, including the bald head and the whiskers, but no amount of extraneous pigment could turn brown eyes to blue. . . .

Mr. Blakeney, the old solicitor, was twittering like a bird, he was not in the secret, it was a shock to him, too, and there was that confounded doctor —was he in the plot—he was laughing ; oh, they were all laughing, roaring, pleased to have made a fool of the detective—the stranger in their midst. Englishmen were like that. Margetson was just as English as they were, but for the moment he felt like a Jew, and nothing but a Jew. He was not one of them. He hated their laughter. He wanted the law, and nothing but the law.

His voice broke into the clamour, coldly. " Do I understand, gentlemen, that you recognise that the prisoner is not Mr. Robert Preston ? "

Anthony pulled off the wig and flung it down.

"I give in, I confess," he said. "I dressed up to take my father's place."

"You did it uncommon well, by gad, you did," said Lord Thorell. "You took us all in. I only thought your father was a bit off colour, not so much on the spot as usual, but his position was a bit embarrassing—ha! ha! ha! You young devil!"

"May I suggest," said Margetson, in a voice that might have frozen the fires of hell, "that the usual procedure would be to commit Mr. Anthony Preston for contempt of court?"

Sir John Elgin pulled himself together. He had known the Prestons for years, his own boy lay where Anthony had lost that finger . . . but still . . . yes, of course, the detective was right.

"Look here," said Anthony. "I don't care if you do commit me, but just listen. My father is eighty, you know he is a fairly good specimen, but still he is eighty, and he—oh, I need not tell you, he is as innocent of this crime as a babe unborn. I know that Mr. Margetson doesn't see it in that light. A curious set of coincidences have piled up a sort of case—but hang it all—a very flimsy case—against him. All the same, if he were here, you'd have to remand him under custody—my father—at eighty—in Calverstoke Gaol. Upon my soul, if he had lost his temper and thrown a book at Eleanor—I never heard of the book until to-day—he would hardly deserve that!"

"The counsel for the defence will no doubt bring all these arguments to bear," said Margetson, dispassionately; he was angry, furiously angry,

but he refused to be rattled. He thought Anthony a good actor, but he was not going to sympathize with a fellow who had made a fool of him ; he had seen the policemen sniggering.

Then Lord Thorell suddenly intervened; he had relapsed into his seat during Anthony's appeal. "Upon my soul," he said, with sudden fervour, "if you *were* your father, I wouldn't do it. I thought we could grant bail, and the thing 'ud get cleared up. I couldn't send the old fellow to gaol, it 'ud be a scandal. Even if he *had* thrown a book at Miss Wentworth. No doubt he did not mean to hit her—stupid woman, ought to have dodged it or fielded it or something . . . clever women are always the devil about anything practical—can't cook a dinner, fail at a pinch . . . it was all her fault . . . but he ain't here. Let's clear out. Bother contempt of court ! I think you're a deuced good actor, Anthony, used to act myself when young. Come along—if you catch Mr. Preston—you—Margetson there—don't ask me to sit—come along now, don't let's talk any more."

"Do you agree ?" Sir John Elgin laughed, as he turned to his other neighbour.

"I think Anthony's dashed clever—and I daresay there's some water somewhere," said young Partridge, rather helplessly. "You do look rum, Anthony, you might have done anything."

"You are not going to accuse me, myself, of the murder, are you ?" asked Anthony. "If you had only held your tongue . . ."

"The surgeon at the gaol would have found out

directly," said Partridge. "Pretty sort of fools we should have looked then!"

The clerk of the court said a few things in an incomprehensible, but presumably legal jargon, of which the upshot seemed to be that the prisoner was discharged.

Anthony made his way to Margetson with his hand held out. "Don't bear a grudge against me," he said, "you'd have done it—a jolly sight better, too—for your own father."

Margetson thought rapidly; he must keep on terms with these people, or chuck the case, and he had never chucked a case yet. "All is fair in love or war," he said philosophically, "meanwhile there is still a warrant out against Mr. Preston. I suppose I can't ask you to tell me where he is."

"No," said Anthony, "as a matter of fact I don't know where he is. He met my brother Oliver the night that he left Greystones. I don't know where they met—and that is all I can tell you."

He did not add that Oliver had written that morning to Molly: "Send the blighter along to me. I'll keep him busy."

"I wish that I could convince you," Anthony went on, "that you are on a wrong track. The real criminal must be laughing in his sleeve."

Margetson suddenly fixed him with a look of steel. "If I had been guilty I should have burst into tears," Anthony said afterwards. "I didn't know that the fellow had guts enough to look like that."

"Do you know who the real criminal is?" Margetson asked.

"I have not the vaguest notion, but I lean towards Pratt's burglar."

"I have never known a burglar kill anyone by hitting them on the head with a book. They have their own weapons as a rule."

"It seems a bit clumsy," Anthony agreed. "What book was it? You did not tell me about the book. Calgarrie and Pratt never mentioned it. It was not shown to the Coroner."

"I found the book, Pratt missed it, but I went through everything in the room pretty thoroughly, after the inquest. It was an old account book with a brass lock and corners."

"Come on, Anthony," Partridge was at his elbow, "I can drive you back, if you'll make yourself look respectable."

"I shall want some grease," said Anthony. "No, I'm padded up and all sorts of things; I'll put the wig on again."

Most of the people of Calverstoke, who happened to see them, supposed that Mr. Preston had just gone home again—no case that would lie against him—they were honestly very glad, though it meant the end of a seven-days wonder in the little country town. Wilkins arrived at Greystones later, grinning all over. "Mr. Margetson's gone to Plymouth," he said, "but he went to the *Dorset Herald* first, they had a reporter in court, and he stuffed them up that they weren't to publish a report. Sir John Elgin went with him."

"I told you that man wouldn't let the grass grow under his feet," said Mrs. Beaumont.

Anthony, returned to his own lawful image, grunted uneasily. "I wish that I knew where my father has gone," he said, "it is all very well, but Margetson has his professional pride to think of, also he's a Jew, and the Jews never let go."

"Are you sure, Daddy," asked Molly. "I thought it was only bull-dogs, bull-dogs of the British breed, who never let go. Mr. Margetson is less like a bull-dog than anyone I ever saw."

"He was more like an image of cold and concentrated fury than anyone I ever saw to-day," said Anthony. "Shylock wasn't in it; he kept his temper remarkably well, but he will never forgive me, even if he catches the real culprit. Old Thorell was a trump. We must not let my father say disagreeable things about his bunny-face again. If he'd looked like—who looked less like a rabbit than anyone that ever was, Molly?"

Molly was accustomed to curious pseudo-literary games and cross-word puzzles, she had an answer pat. "Solomon, I suppose."

"Well, if he'd looked like Solomon in all his glory, he couldn't have played up better than he did."

"Do tell me," said Mrs. Beaumont, "did you go up to London on Saturday in your disguise?"

Anthony laughed. "Yes, I did. It was because that came off so well that I thought of this stunt. It has given my father a little time. I wonder where the dickens he is? Nobody looked at me twice. Borden from the village took me for my father all right. He drove me to the station and made remarks about the weather when I got out,

all that sort of thing. Price, the station-master at Starbeck, was most *empressé* in his attentions, said he hadn't seen me for a long time, hoped I was well. I was rather grumpy to both of them, as my father is when his corns are hurting him. I looked out of the window after I'd got into the train, I had found a carriage to myself all right, and I saw Ritchie bound into the guard's van. So ho ! thought I, and I did not change my clothes until after we had stopped at Dorchester, in case he turned up there. Then I got into my own things and packed the disguise as you call it. I had some grease with me for my face, and luckily no one got in at Dorchester. I got out of my carriage at Waterloo on the wrong side, into another train standing alongside. I did that once before, when I was escaping in Germany. It is not difficult, if you can get from one footboard to the other, but there is always a chance of the door's being locked, or of someone seeing you."

Anthony paused and laughed. "Well, it was rather absurd. I had hardly hauled myself into the other carriage when I'm blessed if the train did not start right away !"

"Daddy !" cried Molly, with fervent horror. "You might have been killed !"

"No, ducky, I don't think so, trains on the Southern Railway don't start like trains in the Tube. I found that I was just retracing my steps, so I got into my disguise again, and came here. I arrived rather late, and found Pratt in command, but I put on my father's best air of injured innocence, and went to bed. I was very hungry, and Mrs.

Crutcher had gone, so I had to put up with Elsie's preparation of Bovril and some cold ham. Mercifully Kate or someone had the inspiration to bring me some of the best Marsala. I did not do badly. Then next day I sent for you, Molly, because I wanted to know what had happened. I did not realize that you already had Margetson in tow. Apparently he started so early from London that Pratt did not catch him on the telephone at his hotel."

"He was dreadfully angry with us at Stanbury," said Molly.

Anthony went out to the stables to find Wilkins, and wondered as he went, what could be done to put Margetson off this entirely false scent. "He is more determined than ever," thought Anthony, "especially after the way that the justices behaved to-day. No doubt he thinks all country magistrates beneath contempt."

Wilkins was cleaning his car, with a face of deep depression. "It is all very well, you know, sir, you've played this trick and it has come off successful like, and I am thankful that Mr. Preston is out of the way, but what troubles me is that we are no nearer than we were at the beginning to the real murderer. Miss Eleanor's face fair haunts me, it does, sir. You needn't tell me that nothing Mr. Preston could do would make her look like that. She saw something—or someone—that fair skeered her. . . . I can't bear to think of it. You ask Dr. Calgarrie—or Pratt—they saw the look. They were downright frightened themselves."

"I saw her only after her eyes were closed.

She looked quite young then, there was no look of terror."

"No, sir? Perhaps it was chiefly in her eyes—but no, it was more than that, her mouth—her whole face—her clenched hand . . . I've no patience with that Margetson. Mr. Preston indeed! He barks a bit, but he's no bite. Look here, sir, why don't the police make more enquiries about strangers here? Pratt says Mr. Margetson enquired about the workmen's train, 6.25 from Starbeck, but that's too early. No one could have got there in time if Kate didn't unbolt the back door till past six, could they, sir?"

"Not on foot. Could anyone have done it with a car or a motor-bike?"

"Not for me to say, sir, but if he'd had a car, surely some of us would have met it? Besides, then he'd have gone straight to London probably, not to the station. No, the gardeners came one way up the road, and I came the other; there wasn't no car, and that's a fact."

Wilkins hesitated, and then went on, "I don't much like that Margetson's going to Plymouth. Mr. Oliver'll never understand. I don't want Mr. Preston to be found, sir, and that's the truth. I thought in court this afternoon, that if he had been in your place, sir, he couldn't have stood it. His heart'd have given out. He can't bear agitation, it does for him."

"Why do you think Mr. Oliver won't understand? I am afraid that sometimes he considers Mr. Preston's health more sympathetically than I do."

"He won't take Mr. Margetson seriously. He'll think if you could play a trick that he can play another. You know what those naval gentlemen are, sir. It ain't right somehow. Mr. Preston's as innocent as a daisy. He said to me that morning before he went to Stanbury, 'This is all wrong, Wilkins. I'd much sooner stand the racket.' I told him I didn't think it'd be good for him; better go away on the quiet, sir, I said, and wait until the real culprit's found. He looked a bit dazed-like, for a minute, as he do sometimes when he's ill, and says he can't see properly. 'The real culprit, the real culprit—it's true she was murdered?' Almost as if he didn't quite believe it. I know he could never stand all that ding-dong in court, although he do seem so fierce sometimes, and I heard him tell 'em off proper last month at the Parish Council about that flooding of the road by the mill, knew all about the law and the—what do you call it, sir—the ripe-something owners; had it all at his fingers' ends."

"Riparian owners," laughed Anthony. "The fellows who own the banks of the river. Yes, he's pretty smart about things like that."

"I suppose, sir," Wilkins touched his cap, "you wouldn't let me go down to Plymouth?"

"Well, by Jove, if you think Mr. Preston's there. . . . Look here, we'll all go. You and I, and I'll take Miss Molly."

He looked at his watch. "Not to-night . . . well, I don't know, we could start, and stop somewhere for the night. I'll tell Miss Molly. We

could drop Mrs. Beaumont on the way—might dine at Stanbury . . ."

He was off, and Wilkins looked after him affectionately. "He don't let the grass grow, neither, he and his wild-cat schemes, as Mr. Preston calls 'em, but he's all right, a real gentleman, Mr. Anthony is . . . the car's quite ready, but I'll get a bite of something before we go. . . . I ought by rights to mow the lawn to-morrow—it looks like a hayfield now. Mr. Preston will be vexed. . . ."

After the fashion of country servants Wilkins did a great many things that were not exactly his job, among them he mowed the big lawns, for the very adequate reason that no one else could work the motor-mower. So the lawns had to convert themselves into hayfields at their own sweet will.

Molly, like most young people, loved doing things in a hurry. Mrs. Beaumont was resigned, and after telephoning, said there would be enough dinner for them all at Stanbury. Anthony was perfectly well aware that she was longing to come with them, but he would not encourage her. "Why do you bring all these clacking females?" his father would ask. Molly would giggle and refuse to be accounted a clacking female, but there would be just enough sting in the adjective to put a strain on Mrs. Beaumont's sense of humour.

The Crutchers always slept in the house when none of the family was there, and Pratt would have to remain. "How we shut the door after the steed is stolen!" thought Anthony, as they drove away.

CHAPTER V

THE other great exponent of seizing Time by the forelock arrived at Plymouth in a state of complete uncertainty. Should he conceal himself and lie in wait for the unsuspecting Mr. Preston until he could "nab him" in the street, or should he go straight to Oliver Preston and demand that his prisoner should be given up to him?

He discovered very quickly that Commander Preston, who was one of the officers at the submarine depôt, lived in the Naval Barracks, and Margetson spent his first evening at Devonport in various bars frequented by the "lower deck," in order to hear if there were any gossip about a guest staying with the commander.

It was not an infallible method, no one knew that better than Margetson himself, who particularly disliked putting on rough clothes and treating "jolly sailor men" at local pubs. But he was a good actor, knew how to encourage talk, and pretended to be travelling for a firm of china and glass manufacturers. At Plymouth he was naturally anxious to provide decanters, tumblers, cocktail-shakers, wine-glasses, direct to any naval mess that required such articles without the intervention of the expensive middleman. He showed himself

also to have a pretty taste for the usual contents of his wares, and to be generously disposed towards anyone likely to assist him in the disposal of his goods. By this method he very quickly got in touch with one of the marines who acted as mess-waiter at the barracks, and went straight to the point by saying that among his oldest customers was Commander Preston's father. He gave a glowing account of the beautiful glass—and still more beautiful drinks—at Mr. Preston's house in Dorsetshire.

"If the commander would let me show him some of my things, he'd recognize them at once. Mr. Preston has great taste at his table. . . ."

"So's the commander," said Gregson, the marine, with a wink, "knows what's what, in a b——y glass or out of it."

"I thought he would. Have you ever seen the old gentleman? He is a rare specimen, he is, one of the old school."

"You don't say? No, I've never seen him. I've seen the commander's brother. Talkative gent, likes his port. He's one of them college gents; they knows a thing or two about cocktails and port too."

Gregson laughed, a little thickly perhaps. He had never met a traveller quite so generous as this one, though he knew the breed pretty well. They never seemed able to realize that the barracks employed regular contractors, and that Gregson had no more power than a mouse even to recommend a liqueur glass, much less tumblers and cocktail shakers.

"Well, that's funny," said Margetson. "I took an order at his house last week and heard that the old gentleman was coming to stay with his son."

"Perhaps he is staying in the town. There's no accommodation much in the barracks, not for an old gentleman who might be fussy-like. Mostly, they puts up at the hotels, and comes round for lunch or dinner, but I haven't seen no old gentleman, nor heard talk of him."

"Well, p'raps he put it off. He's over eighty, and a bit cranky. Now, just let me show you—have another—I'll show you a glass I've got here, and if you don't think it the best shape you've ever seen for a port glass, I'll be surprised, that I will."

He had provided himself with a few specimens, and was not astonished at their popularity when used for treating. They held a lot. The barmaid charged double for filling any one of them, but Margetson did not care. He had discovered definitely that the lower deck had not seen Mr. Preston.

That decided his next move. He was not sure how much Commander Preston already knew, but the detective wanted to get at him before he had had time to hear about the proceedings in court the day before. All the same Margetson groaned to himself. Anthony would hardly have mentioned his brother's name if he had thought it likely to cause any detriment to his father. Nevertheless Margetson believed that Oliver was perhaps the

one person through whom Mr. Preston's whereabouts might be discovered.

Sailors are supposed to be simple people—" the simpler the more difficult," thought Margetson. He would have known a great deal better how to deal with a gang of underworld crooks, warranted to go wrong, than with these people who had consciences and were straight, " up to a point," thought the detective, who believed in a breaking point for all ordinary humanity. " It just shows you," he said to himself, "even these fortunate, so-called honourable, highly respected people, can take cover and defend themselves with remarkable ingenuity and sheer disregard of truth when once they are threatened with the rigours of the law. They think they can do what they like. I fully believe that the old gentleman did murder Miss Wentworth in a moment of rage, perhaps half accident, with that heavy book. And he could go to bed and deny it —there were times when I couldn't believe it myself—but an innocent man wouldn't have tried to escape, his sons must know that."

Margetson's study of psychology had never envisaged a simplicity of the civilized order that made discomfort and the risk of catching cold of greater importance than the self-conscious rectitude that would prefer to be taken into custody and incur heavy expense—to say nothing of possible illness—in order to prove a man's innocence of the charge against him. " If a man's not guilty he does not need to hide," thought Margetson, " and the proof of the pudding is in the eating. If he'd been

in Court to-day, they wouldn't have committed him for trial—at least I suppose that old sheep, Lord Thorell, wouldn't, and that would have been the end of it, for the moment anyhow."

But he was not quite sure. Sir John Elgin had let off Anthony without demur, but he might have found it difficult to be equally lenient if the real offender had been before him. It was true that the Chief Constable of the county, Colonel Eltham, had practically washed his hands of the business and left it all to the detective from Scotland Yard, but he had made inquiries lately of the police inspector at Calverstoke and had pooh-poohed the idea of Mr. Preston as the possible criminal.

"All the same, Sir John was dreadfully bothered by the book," thought Margetson, "because it was just the sort of thing an irritable old fellow might do, throw the book without actually meaning to hurt her. His going off to bed so quietly afterwards was a bit out of the picture; but a man may do anything in self-defence, to avert suspicion, and there's something behind that Colquhoun fund —I shall have to find out a bit more about that. If he played any hanky panky with that, it was enough to scare him stiff when she wanted to publish the facts. Possibly he was only trying to frighten her out of it. Something did frighten her, there's no doubt about that."

The next morning, directly after breakfast, he rang up the naval barracks and asked for Commander Preston—Commander Preston was out; evidently his naval duties began at an early hour.

Margetson asked for an appointment on urgent business, gave his name and the telephone number of his hotel. As the morning went on, he became impatient, walked down to the barracks and again asked for Commander Preston, only to be told that he was still out, and Margetson, full of impatience, went back to his hotel. There he found a message, giving him an appointment at six o'clock. He arrived punctually and was shown into the smoking-room, where a vigorous-looking young naval officer not in the least like the other members of his family whom Margetson had seen, greeted him in a ringing voice and with a sufficiently hearty manner, though with considerable reserve behind it. With all his supposed simplicity, a naval officer is essentially suspicious ; he has a fear, apparently derived from constant contact with his brother officers, of being " bounced," and he never gives himself away to a stranger. Margetson knew at once that Commander Oliver Preston would not answer any questions that he was not fully prepared to answer.

Somehow or other, civil law, as known to the police, hardly seemed to exist in those surroundings; only the Admiralty. Without a word said it was clearly conveyed to the detective that here he had no authority and no status.

Oliver offered his visitor a chair, a cocktail, a cigarette, after the time-honoured custom, but always with the air of one in command to the commanded. Margetson thought that he resented something; but could not say what it was.

He refused all hospitality but the chair, and

began at once. "You know my name, no doubt," he very nearly said "sir," but recovered himself in time. The man was young enough to be his son.

"I do indeed," said Oliver, "if you won't have a cigarette, do light your pipe."

He lighted his own pipe, after the fashion of one to whom time does not exist. There is no one so entirely care free and irresponsible as a naval officer off duty.

"Well then, you know without my telling you, that I am here on serious business, to ask for your father, Mr. Preston's address?"

"Why the hell should I give it to you?" retorted Oliver, in a quiet and conversational tone of voice, looking at the bowl of his pipe to see if it had lighted properly.

"Because," Margetson rapped it out sharply, "he is wanted by the police."

"We don't know anything about the police here," said Oliver. "We are under naval law you know."

"But Mr. Preston is not," said Margetson.

He was not certain how much Oliver was bluffing, speaking with his tongue in his cheek.

"You never know with these people," thought Margetson, referring to those who have their business in great waters, "whether they are really children, or whether what you or anyone else could teach them ain't worth knowing."

"Well, of course," said Oliver, speaking with the air of one making a polite concession, "if my

father were here—he is not, I assure you—he would have to meet you on his own ground."

"And what the devil does he mean by that?" thought Margetson.

"You refuse to give me Mr. Preston's present address?" he asked.

"I have told you that he is not here."

Margetson got up. "Then I won't waste any more time," he said, "but you know that unpleasant consequences can be invoked for those—naval officers or not—who obstruct the police in their duty."

"Sit down," said Oliver. "I am not obstructing you, and you have no witnesses, if I were. Let's talk it over, without prejudice, you know. What is it the newspapers are so fond of—as man to man. I've heard about you from my brother. I recognise that you are only doing your duty. I'd like to talk to you about my father, because you're altogether on the wrong tack about him. You're wasting your time trying to find him. He is not the man you want."

"So I have heard—several times—from your brother. I don't deny that you are good sons."

"We are rather more than that," said Oliver; "we know my father, and we've knocked about a bit, both of us; we aren't easily taken in. My father couldn't murder anyone. It is one of those things that aren't done. If you'd realize that, you'd simplify matters all round."

"I have been told the same story, even more

impressively, about a good many men who have been proved guilty and hanged."

"Think it over," said Oliver. "My father is irritable, and he does not hide his feelings, but he is not violent, never was and never could be. I wish you could have seen my mother. You'd have known that her husband would never touch a woman in anger."

Margetson stared at him in sheer amazement. This display of feeling, of sentiment, or whatever it was, was utterly unexpected. These Prestons were always unexpected. Five minutes before he would have called Oliver a damned obstinate, arrogant brute, with a most annoying "quarter-deck" manner, and now, thought Margetson, he was talking like the hero of a movie about his mother! No, that was not fair. The young man was quite real, unaffected, sincere, in his tribute to his mother. But it was all part of the same thing. These people thought that they could jolly well say just what they liked, and expected everyone to believe them.

"Do you think that you could forget for a few minutes that I am talking about your father, and see the case from a detached point of view? Mind you, I think you are going the wrong way to work. Roughly, in nine cases out of ten, a man is doubtful of himself and his case when he runs away. Just think of him as John Smith, who is accused of the murder of Arabella Brown. . . ."

"Must she be Arabella? I feel that I could murder anyone called Arabella myself. Well—go on!"

Margetson frowned at the levity, but he went on, "There can be no question that she was murdered, hit on the head by a heavy brass-bound book that was evidently thrown at her. John Smith had had a violent quarrel with her—that is known to two reliable witnesses." Margetson repeated the story that he had told before the Calverstoke magistrates, and wound it up by saying, "At the first sign of suspicion being roused against him, Smith ran away, and his friends say that he could not face the ordeal. We put it that he could not meet the charge. Now, if he were really Smith, what would you say?"

"Isn't that the crux of the whole matter? If I don't know what sort of a fellow Smith is, how can I judge? He might bring a whole flood of reliable witnesses to prove that he was totally incapable of murdering anyone."

Margetson shook his head. "None of us is totally incapable. At least who can be sure that he is? I daresay you have experienced with your men that even the most trusted will suddenly run amok. You can't let him off because you thought him incapable of doing anything of the kind?"

"*Touché*!" said Oliver. "I yield the point for the sake of argument, but with my fellows in nine cases out of ten the trouble is caused by drink, and in the tenth case by a woman, sometimes complicated by debt or gambling. My father is not in any of those galleys."

"The whole of this trouble, if I am not mistaken, was caused by a woman in debt—a good many

years ago, it is true—and it is a woman who has suffered for it now."

"Rather a good caption, said Oliver. "No, don't be offended! I see what you mean. You want to persuade us that my father is doing himself harm by running away. Look here, I'll think it over. It may be a mistake not to let him face the music, but he has a groggy heart, it would do no good to anyone if he died in court before any verdict could be given?"

Margetson shrugged his shoulders. "That is not my business, the doctors would have to be consulted, but I have never seen anyone die in court."

"I'll think it over," Oliver repeated slowly, with the manner of a man who is cogitating very deeply, "but, honestly, I don't believe that he would survive sitting in Calverstoke Gaol waiting for the assizes. We might come to an understanding with you to produce him in time for the trial. . . ."

Margetson's face of sheer astonishment made Oliver laugh. "I am not proposing to bribe you," he said.

"Nothing doing that way," said Margetson, "it wouldn't pay me."

Oliver jumped up and smote him with vehemence on the shoulder. "You're a good chap! Tony said that you were, though he vowed he would rather be dead than have the low opinion of his fellow-creatures that you have. I am not sure that you are not right about my father, he himself thinks the hiding business all wrong, but he has a vision of Calverstoke Gaol without his own man,

and can't face it. Perhaps if he could take Wilkins and his books and his hot-water bottle, and a perfect cargo of medical stores and gadgets, he would not mind so much."

"Think it over," said Margetson. He wished he could persuade Oliver that the minor comforts of life were a poor exchange for the higher principles.

"Look here!" Oliver said impulsively, as if on the spur of the moment, "give me till to-morrow, and dine with us to-night, to show that there is no ill-feeling. I must go now, but do come! Never mind about a boiled shirt if you haven't one with you. There won't be many of us."

If Margetson had known a little more about the manners and customs of the Navy, he would have realized that for Oliver to invite him to dine at mess without dressing for dinner meant that for some mysterious reason his presence was much desired, but he had a "boiled shirt," and he went to dine at the barracks. There were only about a dozen men there. The Commodore of the barracks was married and dined at home, some of the others were on leave or away with their submarines. Margetson thought them a quiet lot, pleasant young fellows, though, naturally, he looked on them all as potential criminals, and they occasionally subsided into naval slang which he could not follow, but discovered that most of them were hurrying over their meal to go to a dance in the neighbourhood, some way out of the town.

He sat between Oliver and a light-hearted young lieutenant, Paul Hardy by name, who chattered

freely, mostly about submarines. Evidently he was very keen on his job, and Margetson began to be infected by his enthusiasm, though it struck him once or twice that some of the others looked astonished, if not impatient, and he caught one of them making a face at Hardy. Margetson liked the boy, and, since the war, had always wished to see and know more about the "under-sea boat" at close quarters.

Hardy told him a fine story of courage, perseverance and presence of mind shown by a stoker petty officer who was the sole survivor from a submarine which sank after attempting to ram an enemy submarine during the war. Everyone, except the one man who had remained in the engine-room, was choked by the escape of chlorine gas. The one survivor knew that his only chance was to open the torpedo hatch in the hope of being blown out of the boat by the escape of air. After seven heart-breaking failures he succeeded, though himself half choked with gas, and with one hand badly crushed. Then, as Hardy said, he reported, "I raised the hatch and escaped, rising to the surface and being picked up by the destroyer *Dodo*." As one might say, "I opened the door and walked out," after that desperate but never despairing struggle of over an hour and a half.

Even Margetson had to own that he could not utterly despair of human nature after that story. It would have made Hardy laugh if he had said what he really thought, "We ought to have that man at Scotland Yard."

After dinner, when most of the party had gone to their dance, Oliver, Margetson, Hardy, and another man, who proved to be a doctor, played bridge. Eventually young Hardy said that he would drive Margetson back to the hotel, in his very ancient two-seater car of an antediluvian type that almost shook the teeth out of your head. "You may arrive alive," said Oliver Preston as they started, "but you will certainly be in little bits. Everyone who drives with Hardy is lucky if he can be reassembled from adjacent parts of the car, and not from remote points on the journey."

"I wonder," Hardy said, as they drove away, "if you'd care for a run in my boat, the Z.17? She goes a bit smoother than this," he laughed, "unless the sea's very choppy."

"I have to be off some time to-morrow, thanks very much all the same, I should have liked it," said Margetson, with chattering teeth, clutching his hat.

"Couldn't you stay another night? We are going out to-morrow, three of us Z.'s, for exercises. My skipper is taking a guest, I am sure you could come."

"It is very kind of you," Margetson was really tempted. He enjoyed new experiences, and flying had ceased to be a new experience, but he had never tried a submarine.

"The owner, he was not there to-night, dining with his best girl or something, his name's Jarvis, is taking old Preston, the bloke—I mean Commander Preston's father."

Margetson felt like the proverbial housemaid

who might have been "knocked down with a feather." So that was how they proposed to take Mr. Preston out of his reach. It was quite true that he would never have thought of looking for him in a submarine. He managed to ask without more emotion than could be accounted for by the vagaries of his chariot, "Is Mr. Preston staying in Devonport?"

"No, he is at Stoke or somewhere in the suburbs, but he is coming in to-morrow. We are going to run him over to Westingbury, there's a pier there that we can get alongside. I think he is going to stay with the jolly old Bishop of Truro or somebody like that. You know the bloke's grandfather was a bishop, he is always rather tangled up with ecclesiastics. A car is going to meet Mr. Preston at Westingbury. Rather sporting of the old boy—he's frightfully ancient—to want a run in a submarine, but he says we are not to submerge while he's on board. The M.O.'s coming too, to keep an eye on him. We are going to start at 3 o'clock from the harbour, you know where the submarine pens are, don't you? I don't think there will be a gale to stop us. Do come along if you'd like it."

Margetson concluded that Jarvis, if he had been at dinner, might have been warned to say nothing about Commander Preston's father, but that no one had thought it worth while to warn young Hardy, probably no one troubled to find out if he knew that Mr. Preston was coming, and Margetson himself had been introduced very vaguely as "a friend of my brother's." He looked, as Oliver

remarked in a brotherly spirit to Anthony at a later date, much more aristocratic that most 'varsity dons. Had not the most noble the Vice-Chancellor of Oxford * been turned from the door of one of his own college farms, as a tramp, and a seedy one at that? He was a bachelor, and Molly always said that his clothes reminded her of a third-rate waiter out of work. Margetson bore no resemblance to a waiter of any kind even in a boiled shirt. There was no reason why Hardy should not ask a guest of "the bloke's," to go out for a trip, longing, after the fashion of every specialist and ardent lover, to show off the darling of his heart.

Accordingly Margetson, in high spirits—for was he not killing two birds with one stone, doing his duty and taking his pleasure together—arrived at the submarine steps in the harbour, before three o'clock the next afternoon, giving a glance on his way to some of the famous memorials on the Hoe.

He little knew what was before him.

As Paul Hardy had foretold there was no gale, the sun shone and the wind on shore was not noticeable, but there was a short and choppy sea. Hardy met Margetson with glee, and poured a vast amount of technical information into his ear, as they stood on the sloping deck of that peculiar contraption that calls itself a submarine. He heard much about ballast tanks, batteries, Diesel engines, dynamos, ballast tank vents, re-charging batteries, accumulators, valves, air-storage, stability, pressure . . . if he could have listened intelligently no doubt he

* This is a libel on any Vice-Chancellor.

would have known everything that there is to be known about a submarine in theory and practice.

Hardy and one or two of the seamen who were on deck seemed to find it perfectly natural to stand and walk about at any angle on their precarious craft, with its practical absence of bulwark or freeboard, without holding on to anything, but Margetson clung firmly to a corner of the superstructure,* that contained the conning tower and the one little four-inch gun, because it seemed to be the only support and stay that he could find in a sloping and slippery world.

He asked after Mr. Preston, but was told that he had "gone to earth" already, in the officers' quarters, having stoutly refused to "hold on to nothing by the skin of his teeth." "He's in Jarvis's berth, with his servant holding one hand, and poor old Jarvey the other." Hardy giggled shrilly, and then said, suddenly, "Hullo—sir—you look rather green about the gills. Would you like a spot of brandy?"

He vanished from sight, while Margetson shut his eyes, shivered a little and wished that the sea were not so yellow. Hardy reappeared with startling rapidity; he seemed to be able to balance himself, like a cat or a fly, on any surface, anywhere, even with a tumbler full of liquid in his hand. "It may be rather nasty," he observed, "the M.O. has put some stuff into it. Mother Siegel's soothing syrup—no, that's for babies—but it's Mother-something, anyhow he says it will put you right."

* The Z.17 was of the L-class, not the more modern type with elaborate superstructure and several guns.

Margetson drank it; it was exceedingly nasty—more syrup than brandy, he thought—and it was worse than useless. He was too ill to care, though he found himself wondering what an M.O. was, and if it could be put under arrest for poisoning him, but he relinquished his despairing grasp of the friendly corner that had sustained him, had an idea that he slid into Paul Hardy's arms, and was dragged off somewhere, down some ladder, leading apparently to the nethermost hell, and was laid on a shelf—he thought it was a shelf, but it might have been a coffin—did they take coffins to sea with them? He thought that dead bodies at sea were always sewn up in the Union Jack. . . . After that he seemed to himself to be existing in some awful inferno, full of the smooth uncompromising sounds of engines, punctured by his own agonies, tended quite kindly by a man in blue serge that smelt of the sea—those lines on his collar—what for—Nelson's victories. . . . Nelson was always sea-sick. But Nelson had never been in a submarine. Why had he not followed that great man's example? . . . Then apparently Margetson went to sleep, and woke up with all that awful throbbing and vibrating and rotating at an end, in a peace that he hoped was eternal. . . .

All at once he found his kindly attendant bending over him, asking if he would like a breath of air on deck. The Z.17 was at anchor, he said, at Westingbury. Margetson's professional zeal was on the alert at once. He waited for nothing, but picked up his coat, collar and tie, that had been taken off

for him, and dashed up the companion ladder, or whatever it was called, and found himself on deck, just as a gangway was hauled on board again. The boat was alongside a fisherman's little rough pier, and walking up the pier, in his usual sturdy manner, his characteristic gait and the droop of his left shoulder clearly visible, was Robert Preston, followed by—yes, without doubt—followed by Wilkins. Robert turned round and waved his stick, a familiar farewell gesture, to the submarine. At the shore end of the pier, within a stone's throw, as it were, stood a large car, evidently waiting for him.

Margetson made a dash for the side of the submarine, meaning, if necessary, to make a jump for it, but he was held back by kindly though determined hands. "You can't go ashore now, sir," said someone, "very sorry, sir, we didn't know you wanted to land," and Hardy came up behind him.

"Are you better, sir, I thought you were asleep. You've had a rough passage. I am deuced sorry. You can't land now, I am afraid, we're just going to dive. You won't feel the movement so much below. We're going to do exercises, but we shan't be long. It looks like blowing."

"You ought to have put me ashore," Margetson said furiously, "if I am as ill as I was before, I should think it would kill me. . . ."

"Come along and look slippy, if you don't want to be washed overboard. . . ."

Down they went, somehow, and down went the Z.17. The remainder of Margetson's painful pilgrimage under the sea may be covered with a

veil of silence. It was only a poor remnant of a man who staggered back to his hotel at Devonport late that evening.

. . . . . .

"You need not have given the poor chap such a stiff go of emetic—whatever it was," so said Oliver Preston, later on the same evening, in intimate converse with the doctor and Paul Hardy.

"He was bad," said Hardy, reminiscently, "I've never seen anyone make such heavy weather of it. I thought we should bring back only his corpse. But Mr. Preston got away all right, he was not sick at all, though he said he was going to be. I drew a touching picture of his prostration in Jarvey's cabin for Margetson's benefit."

"You carried out your orders very well, Hardy," said his superior officer, kindly. "Your conversation at mess yesterday nearly made me sick, but no doubt it impressed Margetson. I am hardly in a position to report favourably about you, but My Lords would doubtless express their appreciation of your services if I could. Did you tell our suffering friend that my father had gone to Truro?"

"I did, and I think the poor blighter will go there to-morrow, but he won't ask us to take him."

"It shows how little Margetson understands my father, or he would know that it is as absolutely unthinkable that he would risk himself in a submarine as that he would commit murder."

"I am really beginning to respect Mussolini and his castor-oil methods," said the doctor.

"Poor old Margetson!" Paul Hardy laughed.

" He was as meek as a lamb when we landed him. I told off Rogers to look after him, and he clung to Rogers like a child to his nanny."

" You're a hard-hearted, little beast," said Oliver. " Anthony imitates my father very well, though he wouldn't come face to face with Margetson again, something to do with the colour of his eyes. I've had a rough time with Molly, because she wasn't allowed to go too, disguised as Wilkins was her idea, I think. You'd better take her out, Hardy, and submerge and do trick turns with her as soon as you can, or life won't be worth living. Don't let this old fellow dose her though, at least not yet, we'll try gentler methods first, before we imitate Mussolini."

" Don't insult an old fellow," said the M.O. " Am I not a gallant man, a squire of dames, and a humble admirer of Miss Molly? Your friend Margetson looked a shade yellow, I expect he will be none the worse for his dose."

" I'd sooner stay yellow," said Hardy, and dodged something that the doctor threw at him.

" I wonder what our brother of Truro will do," said Oliver, chuckling, " talk tosh about being answerable only to the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, as I did about the Admiralty and naval law, though I think friend Margetson suspected the presence of my tongue in my cheek. Poor chap! The underworld must be a joke compared to us. I should think he'd become a red hot Socialist out of sheer annoyance with the professional classes!"

CHAPTER VI

MARGETSON got out of bed the next morning at a reasonably early hour. He felt sore and bruised and rather jaded altogether, but he rang for tea and toast and a Bradshaw without doing more than groan at the thought of catching a train to Truro.

He wondered if Oliver Preston knew who had been on board the Z.17, and if he would contrive to warn his father? For that reason Margetson considered it incumbent upon him to make an early start. Of course Oliver would send for him later to argue once more about Mr. Preston's innocence, and probably in the end would give him a false address. Margetson wondered a little why Oliver had not done that before, but concluded that he had thought it wiser to keep the detective under his own eye until his father was out of reach. Margetson wondered still more why Anthony had brought him within reach, but supposed that for some reason, probably connected with Mr. Preston's health, his start for Truro had been deferred, or perhaps Anthony had not been prepared for Margetson's very prompt departure from Calverstoke.

The waiter who brought his breakfast and the Bradshaw, also brought two telegrams, which made the detective sit up in bed and swear aloud.

The first telegram ran:—

"House broken into last night Miss Wentworth's room entered only self and Crutchers here waiting instructions. Pratt. Greystones."

The second was from the police inspector at Calverstoke:—

"Can you return immediately development at Greystones. Smithers."

Margetson was torn in two, here was Robert Preston almost within his grasp, but what did this new "development," as Smithers called it, mean?

He asked for a trunk call to be put through to Calverstoke, and meanwhile dressed, in the spirit of the mediæval knight, who bathed before he went into battle, if at no other time in his life.

Then he began to look up trains for Truro. Who could have broken into Greystones, unless it were another ruse engineered by Anthony, for whom Margetson now had the deepest mistrust? Anthony must have known of his father's whereabouts, although he had disclaimed that knowledge, or how could he have sent Wilkins so quickly to join his master at Devonport? The whole affair seemed to be a plant, to keep Margetson on the run. If that boy had not invited him to go out in the Z.17, he would still be absolutely in the dark as to his quarry's movements. Anthony was evidently trying to get him back to Greystones. It was all very clever, very neat. There would have been nothing in the wide world to connect Mr. Preston with the Bishop's palace at Truro, if, by the mercy of Providence, that enthusiastic impulsive youth had not invited Marget-

son to go for that most painful and personally disastrous run. Even as it was he had been so ill that he had very nearly missed seeing Mr. Preston altogether.

Margetson went downstairs to speak to Inspector Smithers on the telephone, and try to find out more about the new position.

Smithers was at all events definite on one point. "I think you had better come back," he said, "my own impression is that this outrage is connected with some property of Miss Wentworth's. You went through her belongings, and you could tell better than we can. I have had nothing touched. The room is in sheer confusion, but I have had the windows barred heavily outside, and have put two men on night duty."

Margetson explained that he knew Mr. Preston was at Truro, at the Bishop's palace, and that he himself meant to go there that day. He continued, in the code that had excited Molly, to say that he meant to arrest Mr. Preston there, and would bring him to Calverstoke probably next morning.

The inspector urged him to come at once. "I think you will agree that this occurrence rules out Mr. Preston. Someone is after something that was in Miss Wentworth's possession. It was her room they got into, by a ladder, through the window."

Again in code, Margetson suggested that it was only the family. Mr. Anthony was probably attempting to distract attention from his father. The inspector's reply was astonishing. "I have made enquiries. Mr. Anthony, with his daughter

and Wilkins, left by car the same evening that you did, apparently, according to the servants and Mrs. Beaumont, for Devonport. They certainly slept at Exeter that night, and arrived at Devonport the next day, because Wilkins' wife had a letter from him that she showed to Pratt. I don't think that this affair has anything to do with the family."

"The Crutchers aren't in it, I suppose?"

"No, no, Pratt heard noises in the night, and woke them up."

"Has any information been sent to the Prestons?"

"Not to my knowledge. I told Pratt to wire only to you."

"Very well," Margetson said reluctantly, "I will come as soon as I can."

He still wanted to go to Truro, to make sure of his prisoner there. Then an idea occurred to him. He got himself put through to the palace at Truro, and said he was speaking for Commander Preston, who was anxious to know how Mr. Preston was after his journey.

The call was answered, evidently by a servant, who made considerable difficulties over the name. Margetson at last said impatiently, "Surely Mr. Preston is staying at the palace. He should have arrived yesterday."

The man seemed astonished. "No, sir, Mr. Preston is not here. Hold the line, I will make enquiries."

After some delay, an educated voice began to speak. "I am the Bishop's chaplain—we don't understand about Mr. Preston. I think I know who

you mean, Mr. Robert Preston of Greystones, no, he has not been here, was not expected. The Bishop hopes that there has been no accident. He would like to speak to Commander Preston."

Margetson said that the commander was out, on duty, but would ring up later. He professed considerable anxiety, and stated that, " Mr. Preston started from Westingbury yesterday, to motor to Truro, and he had certainly intended to go to the palace."

The chaplain then went away, but came back with a further message from the Bishop. He would have been delighted to see Mr. Preston, but had not expected him, and he had not arrived. No car had been sent from the palace to meet him at Westingbury.

Slowly it began to dawn on Margetson that he had been " diddled again." What had the Calverstoke inspector said ? *Anthony* had gone to Devonport. He rang off, promising that Commander Preston himself would telephone later.

Margetson sat down, with his still somewhat dizzy head between his hands. He felt very much like " the morning after the night before," but his mind worked clearly enough.

The missing link was revealed; at last he understood why Anthony had broadly hinted at information to be obtained from Oliver. Truro was not in the plot. His fellow passenger in the Z.17 had been *Anthony* and not *Robert* Preston.

Margetson swore so loudly that a frightened servant of the hotel came up to ask him if anything

were the matter. He pulled himself together, asked for a whisky and soda, his bill and a taxi to meet the next train to Truro. He would go back to Greystones at once, but would leave the Prestons under the impression that he had gone to Truro. He knew that there was an up train about the same time. Had Pratt or Crutcher wired the news about the house to Anthony or Oliver? Margetson hoped fervently that they had not. But his suspicion of an ingenious plot arranged by Anthony remained strongly fixed in his mind. It would call for someone who knew the house very well to break straight away into Eleanor Wentworth's room. He made calculations. The Z.17 had arrived at Westingbury before five o'clock. It might have been just possible in the big touring car that he had seen to get back to Greystones before dawn, though the day broke early. He had not asked at what time Pratt had heard sounds and awakened the Crutchers.

Margetson arrived at Greystones late in the afternoon, after picking up Smithers, the chief inspector, at Calverstoke. Pratt and one of the Calverstoke constables on duty met them at the door, Pratt in a far more cheerful frame of mind than when Margetson had seen him last. But he volunteered no information until Smithers questioned him, "What did you hear last night?"

"I was asleep, but was waked by the sound of someone moving in the passage or the next room. I was sleeping in the room next to the bow-window, Miss Eleanor's room. At first I thought it was Crutcher, getting up early to pump or something.

Then I looked at my watch, it was about 3 o'clock, too early for Crutcher, so I got out of bed. Sure enough I could see a light under Miss Eleanor's door. The key of that room has been kept locked up in a cash box in my room, so I could get it quickly, but I thought it better to wake Crutcher and get him to come with me. I crept round to their room as soft as I could, but I s'pose the thief heard me. When we opened the door—it was locked all right—we found no one. The room was all of a clutter as it is now, and the window was broken. There was a candle guttering—mercy it didn't set fire to the house, with all the papers there was about. There was a ladder up against the window."

"Why do you say 'the thief,' had he taken anything?"

"Not as I know, sir, but Mr. Smithers thought best to leave things as they were till you came."

"What time did you go to bed?"

"About ten o'clock, sir. Not much after."

"Did you go round the house first?"

"Yes, sir. Me and Crutcher. We did every night, right round, outside, stableyard, front-drive and garden and all.

"You saw no one, heard nothing?"

"Not a blessed thing, sir. Patch, the yard dog, was tied up in his kennel and we let him loose. I'll swear he never made a sound all night."

Margetson grunted, "Looks as if he knew the thief. Where was he in the morning?"

"Out in the yard, sir, waiting for his breakfast, as he always do."

Margetson grunted again. He thought that was pretty good evidence against the family. Patch was a mongrel, but a very good watch-dog. It had been one argument against any theory of an intruder from outside when Eleanor was murdered, that no one had heard Patch bark.

Margetson went outside first, and saw where the branches and leaves of the roses growing up to the broken window had been flattened and crushed by the ladder against them. The window had been boarded and nailed up. There was not much else to see.

Margetson felt that he would be on firmer and more familiar ground, hunting for a tangible thief, than struggling through the web woven round him by the Preston determination to keep their father out of his reach. Yet he hardly hoped to find a fresh clue in this affair. He felt more and more certain, not only that in hunting for Mr. Preston he was on the track of the real murderer, but that the old man's sons knew it. The position had become strained and difficult. Even if he brought an action against the sons for obstructing him in his duty, he doubted if any case would lie against them. The magistrates at Calverstoke had rather "cramped his style."

Smithers had made enquiries about the possible escape of the thief, but no one had heard or seen anything unusual. After all there were few people on the roads at three o'clock in the morning. The

gates had all been shut and fastened when Pratt and Crutcher went to bed and apparently they had not been opened. It had rained rather heavily in the early morning so that all wheel-marks or foot-marks had been obliterated. It seemed evident that the intruder had come on foot or had at all events left his car, if he had one, somewhere outside the Greystones demesne.

"Well, we must go and look upstairs," Margetson said at last. He and Smithers went together, followed by Pratt, into the bow-windowed room, where Eleanor had been sleeping. Margetson himself had already gone through everything in that room, and as a precaution he had caused all the papers, which Eleanor had had with her on that fatal night, to be brought upstairs from the library, and locked up in the bureau, which stood in the window. It was on those family papers that he depended to prove the motive for the crime of which he accused Robert Preston.

He had thought "the bow-window" a most charming room, with that air of grace and rightness that belongs only to rooms that have been cared for by one generation after another; the atmosphere of having "grown," and not of having come out of a shop. The graceful old furniture was of the "farmhouse" type very general in the eighteenth century, and the gay-flowered chintzes were lavender and green. This highly-favoured room had a southern aspect, looking over the garden, and away to the blue distance of fields and woods. The window itself was modern, a bit built on to the original house,

over Robert Preston's smoking-room below, which had also an added bow-window, of the same comfortable type. Until he inherited the house there had been no smoking-room, he remembered as a young man, in his grandfather's day, being sent to smoke in the kitchen. In the present day, naturally, everyone smoked everywhere, and "the smoking-room" had become just Robert's own sanctum and den.

Outside the house trees grew not far off, and among them a pink chestnut then in full and glorious bloom which must have thrown a glow right into the room when the windows were open on the east side. There were two or three rooms beyond the bow-window upstairs, in what might be called the east wing, and a garden door next to the smoking-room below. A couple of panes on the east side of the window had been broken, and evidently a ladder had been put up there, a very easy matter, as the house was not high, and the walls were thickly covered with creepers, roses, jessamine and clematis. Doubtless a hand had been put through the broken pane to unfasten the bolt of the sash window, and the rest must have been easy. The windows of the upper floor had shutters, but they were never fastened, and could easily be pushed aside.

Margetson stopped in dismay as the door opened. The room as he had left it, was in the drearily neat state of being unused, shut up, with dust sheets or newspapers over everything, permeated with a strong smell of camphor, and with every cupboard or wardrobe door closed, every drawer firmly in

position, the bureau locked. But now the dust sheets had been thrown into a mangled heap on one side, every drawer and door was open, the bureau and the floor all round it seemed to be a mass of dishevelled papers, letters, notebooks, diaries, sheets of foolscap, one or two parchment deeds, long envelopes, in a strange confusion, all heedlessly thrown down, dashed hither and thither, pell mell, in a wild mad unheeding search for something, something that had been found and carried away, or that Pratt's well-meant, but doubtless elephantine, efforts to be quiet had disturbed the searcher in time to save ?

Margetson gasped, " Someone in a damned hurry ! "

" You bet," said Smithers, who was not a refined person, " but this is the real thing, Mr. Margetson, no joke of Mr. Anthony's."

Margetson was silent, but he could not deny it. There was something familiar, though perhaps sinister, about all this. He had seen it before, this apparently insane, desperate, secret, hurried search for something, regardless of any and every other consideration in the world.

But a search for *what ?* What could Eleanor ever have possessed that could account for this condition of affairs ? What had she attempted to conceal or to keep even at the cost of her own life, and that was still being hunted at the risk of the hunter's life ? She had no jewels of any value, and no hoard of money, of that Margetson was certain.

If Pratt had only opened the door at once without

going for Crutcher, would he have caught red-handed the real culprit, the murderer, or would he in his turn have been sacrificed to some grim need?

Pratt had evidently been frightened, there was no doubt about that, but if he had only been quick enough——?"

"There might have been more than one man in it," said Smithers, who was probably going through exactly the same considerations and calculations as Margetson was, "but you can't suppose it was Mr. Preston this time."

"God knows," said Margetson, bitterly. "I have not the least idea where Mr. Preston is, or what he is doing. So far as I know he is still the only living soul who could possibly have any interest in these papers."

It flashed into his mind that if the Colquhoun papers had disappeared, his strongest proof of Robert Preston's motive for committing murder had gone.

"Then he was not at Truro after all?" asked Smithers, in considerable astonishment.

"No. That was another false scent, laid by Mr. Anthony."

"You don't say so! All the same you can't see Mr. Preston climbing up a ladder and breaking a window to get into his own house?"

"No," Margetson wondered for a moment if he could not see Molly and Mrs. Beaumont doing it, but he hesitated; this was not the work of an innocent amateur. There was an atmosphere of "the real thing" about it.

"Any good looking for finger-prints?" asked Smithers. "It's dusty enough."

Margetson went up to the bureau; there were some marks on the polished desk, where the papers had been thrown aside. He produced a magnifying glass out of his pocket.

"Gloves," he said, "oh, yes, that settles it, I suppose, no amateur."

"You never know," said Smithers. "Everyone reads such a lot of detective stories in these days, it might be the first thing they'd think of. They'd have to put on gloves to get a hand through that broken pane."

But Margetson was standing, with a transfixed expression of countenance, looking at a paper that had been pushed on one side among the others.

"I think that I had better go through the lot," he said.

. . . . .

That evening he wrote to Oliver Preston, explaining what had happened, and why he had had to return so unexpectedly to Greystones.

"I think we are on the track of the real murderer now," he wrote. "There is no reason why Mr. Preston should not come home if he chooses."

No doubt Anthony would recognize a bit of real human nature in the next sentence, "I know that Mr. Preston is not at Truro, and that he was not my fellow-passenger in the Z.17."

It gave Margetson considerable pleasure to refrain from saying how he had come by that know-

ledge. If they liked to think that he had recognised Anthony so much the better.

All the same he might have been astonished if he had seen Anthony and Oliver with their heads together over his letter. "Is it only a ruse to get my father back?" asked Oliver.

"Rather a clever ruse," said Anthony, "perhaps we ought to wire to Ely to tell R. P. what has happened at the house, and suggest that he should continue to lie doggo."

It appeared that though Mr. Preston had not "taken cover" in one bishop's palace, he had gone to another, and was staying at Ely. The Bishop of Ely was his cousin and great friend. It was "a good wide zig-zag," as Oliver said, "after escaping to Lyme Regis to fetch up at Ely." Oliver had told no one, not even Anthony, where his father was, until Margetson's letter arrived.

A reply to their telegram came the next morning. "Mr. Preston left palace Wednesday no address his lordship away. Gough."

Anthony knew that Gough was the butler at the palace.

"Now where the devil has my father gone?" asked Oliver.

CHAPTER VII

THE day that the telegram from Ely was received at Devonport, Anthony, Molly and the faithful Wilkins once more, in nautical language "sailed and proceeded" to Ely.*

It was a long journey; they arrived late and took refuge in an hotel. The next morning, as early as they dared, Anthony and Molly went to the palace, which Anthony knew very well. They found that it was practically shut up, but the Bishop's chaplain, who was also his secretary, was there and welcomed them, though, Anthony thought, with a certain reserve. The Bishop was unmarried, and it was supposed that he left all household management to his chaplain, Mr. Underwood, and his wife.†

Mr. Underwood was a middle-aged man, a little overwhelmed by his own importance, inclined to stand on his dignity, also unfortunately inclined to be fond of the sound of his own voice, which made him repeat himself at frequent intervals. He had a somewhat long red face, a long nose, and a thin

* A ship is still said to "sail," even in these days of unmitigated mechanism; she always "proceeds," and never "goes" anywhere.

† Ely is only a geographical expression. No Bishop anywhere ever had a chaplain like Mr. Underwood.

neck, slightly blue, which had an inclination to fold under the chin. Molly, with her modern youthful disrespect of persons, said afterwards that he reminded her of a turkey-cock, full of pretentious gobbles, but with no chin and no fight in him. "No chin?" said Anthony, "I thought he had quite a number of chins."

"The Bishop," said Mr. Underwood, "sailed in the *Montarabia* for the Canaries some days ago, yes, some days ago. He had been ailing all the winter, and his doctor prescribed a sea-voyage. Yes, yes, a sea-voyage. Perhaps you saw the announcement in the *Morning Post*? The Bishop told me that Mr. Preston would find it convenient to remain here for a time, so Mrs. Underwood and I did our best to make him comfortable. Yes, yes, we did our best. He was very independent for his age, and liked going out alone to visit his old acquaintances in the Close, but he seemed fidgety, yes, yes, and if I may say so, a little irritable. Mrs. Underwood thought so too, yes, yes, she thought so too. We had to go away for a couple of nights, to visit our son at school, and when we came back, we heard that Mr. Preston had left the palace, yes, he had left the palace. He had written a note for me, and did not say that he was going home, but he gave no other address, so we concluded that he had returned to Greystones."

"But he is not at home," Anthony broke in hastily, before the conclusion could be repeated in Mr. Underwood's impressive manner, "and

for business reasons it is important that I should be able to communicate with him at once."

"You began to talk just like Mr. Underwood," Molly told her father afterwards, "as if you had a plum in your mouth, and a poker down your back."

"I am grieved to hear that you have any difficulty in communicating with him," said Mr. Underwood, looking apprehensive, and with the blue shade of his neck invading his cheeks, "but I can assure you, yes, yes, I can assure you that I am totally ignorant of Mr. Preston's whereabouts."

"Well, but look here," said Anthony, "surely Gough would know, or one of the servants? It is very unlike my father to go off without leaving an address."

Mr. Underwood gobbled a little, and then coughed, he seemed rather at a loss. "Shall I ring the bell?" asked Molly innocently.

"I think," said Mr. Underwood, looking thoroughly startled, and drawing in his chin, which did not require it, "that if anyone in this house knows, I should know. The Bishop left me in charge with complete authority—yes, yes, complete authority over the household staff. If anyone is to ask the servants, I should prefer to do it myself —or Mrs. Underwood, of course, Mrs. Underwood."

"Mrs. Underwood evidently wears the breeches," thought Anthony, vulgarly.

"I am very sorry to be troublesome," he said,

"but if you—or Mrs. Underwood—would not mind finding out one or two details for me, I should be infinitely obliged."

Molly said "gobble-gobble-gobble" under her breath, and her father turned his back on her, but she could see his shoulders shake.

"Details?" said poor Mr. Underwood, "details? Really I don't know. What details?"

"It is a shame to bother you," Anthony was getting quite sorry for the man; he envisaged Mrs. Underwood as a very masculine and hectoring lady, "but I must find out somehow where my father has gone. He is an old man, you know. Did he go by car or by train? Gough could tell us that anyhow, couldn't he? Naturally it would not have interested you or Mrs. Underwood."

"If he went by car," said Molly, "he may have had an accident. He may be lying unconscious by the roadside now."

"Good heavens! Mr. Preston! What a terrible idea! Certainly, certainly, ring the bell, my dear young lady, by all means ring the bell."

In a few moments Gough opened the door, but he was not told to come in and answer questions, he was sent to ask Mrs. Underwood to come down to the library.

"I hope you have no objection," said the Bishop's chaplain to Anthony, "but in all household matters I always—er—consult Mrs. Underwood."

Anthony expected to see a modern Mrs. Proudie, a managing woman, and he was, in his turn, startled, when a very delicate-looking, shrinking little figure,

dressed in speckled uncertain garments, as if she apologized for having to be dressed at all, appeared, and almost ran to her husband, apparently for protection against possibly heartless strangers.

He introduced his visitors, and with much repetition of any favourite turn of speech, he told her what they wanted to know. "Did you hear anything, my dear? Did the servants mention the—er—manner, yes, the manner, of Mr. Preston's departure?"

"No, no, indeed. I asked no questions. They said he had gone. I suppose—our—the Bishop's car took him to the station."

"Of course, of course, no doubt, no doubt. Well, Mr. Preston, I don't think we can tell you any more. The Bishop's car took him, no doubt, to the station."

Mr. Underwood drew himself up, thrust one hand into his trousers pocket, smiled benevolently, and evidently believed that the trouble was over.

"Perhaps the Bishop's chauffeur could tell us what ticket he took," said Molly, seeing that her father was apparently stricken dumb.

"Perhaps," said Mrs. Underwood, and then with a sudden access of volubility, "perhaps not. You know he cannot leave the car at the station, he has to stay with it. Dear Mr. Preston no doubt found a porter, he could not have carried his own luggage, though he had so little with him. His washing was really a question, but we have a laundry here in the palace and I think we managed fairly well for him, gentlemen's shirts you know, so difficult

to get up, and the Bishop and Mr. Underwood don't wear them——"

"Don't wear shirts?" said Molly, "isn't it very uncomfortable? Grandpapa wouldn't like that. Do they do it as a religious penance?"

Mrs. Underwood giggled shrilly and feebly. "Oh, dear, what have I said? So like me! No; I mean *evening* shirts, dear, you know, with stiff fronts, shiny, Our laundry maids are not accustomed to them, though they do the Bishop's collars and cuffs very well. I think Mr. Preston bought some more shirts in the town. He and the Bishop bought them together. The dear Bishop was quite excited, said he had not done such a thing for years. Gough orders all his clothes for him."

"I expect Gough would have made a better hand of the shirts," said Anthony, wondering why in the world they were talking about shirts. It was like his father to insist on dressing punctiliously for dinner at the palace, though he generally contented himself with an old velvet smoking-coat at home.

Suddenly, while poor Mrs. Underwood and Molly maundered on, Anthony understood; *Gough* was the *deus ex machina*. These two feeble souls were perhaps figureheads, but Gough did the work. It was like Harold Moxon, the Bishop, to maintain, probably out of his private means, at a good salary, an inefficient ass like Underwood, because he was sorry for him. Anthony began, also in a flash, to understand why his father had—run away.

"After a week of Underwood I should have turned into a poor gabbling thing like his wife," thought Anthony, "but my father is made of sterner stuff."

He made up his mind to follow the excellent parental example, "Good-bye," he said, "sorry to have bothered you. We must go and make enquiries at the station."

"But—but——" Mrs. Underwood evidently struggled with emotion too deep for words; her husband came nobly to the rescue, "Won't you and Miss Preston stay for lunch? We generally lunch at one o'clock, yes, at one o'clock."

"Thank you very much, no, we must get on. I have a great deal to do. Good-bye—many thanks—no, don't trouble to come out. I know the way, used to stay here as a boy. Good-bye, come along, Molly."

They found themselves in the hall at last, without the Underwoods, and Gough, with a myrmidon at the door, was holding Anthony's coat.

"I want to have a word with you, Gough," said Anthony, "old times and all that, you know. When can you come round to the *Royal Dane*? Miss Preston and I are staying there, but we have to be off this afternoon."

"Thank you, sir," said Gough; he found something in his hand besides Anthony's coat collar, "I'll be down in half an hour."

"Good for you," said Anthony.

"I call that a cowardly flight," said Molly, when they were well on their way and she had stopped

laughing, after comparing Mr. Underwood to a turkey cock and Mrs. Underwood to a turkey hen. "A turkey hen moves her head and gobbles and giggles just like Mrs. Underwood," Molly said. "Figure to yourself, Daddy, that you and I, two strong competent human beings, with a fair share of brains between us—yes, I know you have the larger share, don't argue about it—we have been defeated, routed, put to flight, by a turkey cock and hen! They did not tell us one single thing we wanted to know."

"I found out, though," said Anthony, with conscious pride, "that Gough could tell us."

"The Underwoods are probably congratulating themselves at having got rid of us without having to question Gough in our presence. It must be awful to feel like that."

"Like what?" asked Anthony. "Underwood feels all right. He has complete authority over the household staff, and he always consults Mrs. Underwood on domestic matters. What more would you have?"

"It must be awful to have an inferiority complex about your own butler. I wonder what the turkey-chick at school is like?"

"I don't care a—brass farthing—what he is like."

"You might just as well have said a bloody curse," said Molly, "much more expressive than a brass farthing. I shouldn't have minded, and the Underwoods wouldn't hear. Just think how they'd gobble if they did!"

"I wish you would mind," said her father. "It is one of my arguments with your mother. She likes beauty about her, people, clothes, furniture, good Lord, yes! They cost a pretty penny, and she is welcome to them all, but why not have beautiful language too? Why does she let you talk what she calls modern slang?"

"You don't set us a very good example, darling," said Molly, demurely, taking his arm, "and language does not cost anything."

Anthony groaned. "No, it comes out of the gutter."

"You are rather a dear," said Molly. "I'll say gobble gobble if you like. What are you going to ask Gough?"

After all Gough, when he arrived at the hotel, could only tell them that it was not the Bishop's car that took Mr. Preston away. Mr. Preston had hired a car in the town, quite suddenly, in the morning of the day when Mr. and Mrs. Underwood were expected back in the afternoon.

"Do you know the garage?" asked Anthony.

"Yes, sir, Fitzwilliam's in Northover Street."

"Mr. Preston did not give you any address for his letters?"

"No, sir, I took it for granted that he was going home, and I knew the Greystones address, but he did tell me to open any telegram that came for him, and answer that he had left the palace, if the telegram required an answer. I was not to forward it. He left me some money for replies, but you prepaid your answer, sir."

"Quite so. I suppose he did not mention any reason for going?"

"No, sir—except—he was quite happy while his Lordship was here, but afterwards——"

"Well, afterwards?"

"He seemed—well—a bit bored, sir, I should say. . . . I think he wanted to get home, if I might say so, sir."

"But he has not gone home," said Anthony, "that's the trouble. I am dreadfully afraid that he may have had an accident, and that no one knows his address."

As a matter of fact, Anthony was a good deal relieved to hear of his father's provision for telegrams, it made him much less anxious than he had been before. Possibly the old fellow had thought it a good move. No one should know where he was, not even his own sons.

"Well, sir, Fitzwilliam's might tell you. The car may be back by now."

Anthony turned the conversation, talked about the Bishop, asked after Mrs. Gough and the youngsters, and was very affable and friendly, as Gough himself would have said.

After the man had gone, Anthony said to Molly, "Gough is the perfect servant. Did you notice that we never once mentioned the Underwoods, and his eye did not even twinkle when he said that my father was bored. Poor old boy! No wonder! I can't think how he stuck them out so long."

"Where can he be?" asked Molly, a trifle anxiously. "Let's go at once to Fitzwilliam's.

I feel as if 'life would be never the same again', as your old song says. Grandfathers ought to be always available, in the chimney corner. If you don't know where your grandfather is, what do you know? I expect to hear that Mummy has vanished, and then I shall commit hari-kari in sheer despair. Chimney corners ought not to move."

"I suppose you don't look on me as a chimney corner?" asked Anthony, discontentedly.

Molly laughed. "I don't hope that you, or if you come to think of it, Mummy, won't move," she said.

Fitzwilliam was only a little more helpful. Mr. Preston had taken the car for a week, a Daimler saloon, with one of their best drivers. No, the car was not back yet, he did not expect it for a day or two. Besides, Mr. Preston had said he might require it a little longer. Yes, he had given them a cheque for the week; it did not much matter, they knew he was staying at the palace. The number of the car? Oh, yes, of course. A girl bending over a card index in the background gave them the number, wrote it on one of the Fitzwilliam bills, and that was all.

"No, the chauffeur has not communicated with us," this was in answer to Molly, with a smile. "He wouldn't, unless Mr. Preston wanted to hire the car for another week."

"I suppose you heard no instructions about the road they were to take," asked Anthony. "We are anxious, because Mr. Preston has not written, and if there were an accident——"

"We should have heard of an accident, I think, certainly," was Fitzwilliam's opinion, "but we were not told where Mr. Preston was going."

However, half-way down the street as they went away, a girl's voice was heard calling after them, "You left your bag in the garage, Miss," she had it in her hand and gave it to Molly, "and, oh, please, Miss, I heard you asking about our number five Daimler. The chauffeur, George Green, he's engaged to me," she looked quite pretty as she said it, "and I had a letter from him last week. They were at Cambridge then, and were going on to London, after that he did not know."

Both Anthony and Molly thanked her warmly. The return of the bag was an excuse for more material gratitude, addresses were exchanged, she would let them know if she heard again.

"But after all," said Anthony, as they went on, "she hasn't told us anything. London is no clue at all. I am beginning to feel for Margetson."

Molly stopped short. "Margetson! Of course he is the man! He does not want to find Grandpapa on his own account now, but he may as well find him for us. The police aren't much good if they can't find a car when they know the number. We must send him that number at once!"

CHAPTER VIII

ANTHONY thought that it might be worth while to go to London and enquire for news at his father's club, also from the Charltons, with whom Robert Preston generally stayed when in Town.

Meanwhile, Anthony had a curious conversation with Margetson on the telephone. They fenced with each other a good deal, and Margetson was exceedingly stiff and unbending in his manner and speech. He refused to say any more about the latest event at Greystones, but Anthony at last made him believe that none of the family knew where Robert Preston had gone. "I must leave it to you," Anthony said at last. "I understand that you withdraw your charge against my father, owing to the fresh evidence that has now come before you. I refrain from saying, 'I told you so,' but I will give you the number of the car that he took from Ely, and suppose that you can set the proper machinery in motion to find out where that car is now. No doubt I could also get a message to my father broadcasted? He is fond of listening to the wireless wherever he is. I should like to let him know that there is no further object in his keeping away from his own house."

Margetson then spoke urgently and hastily: "No, no, nothing must be broadcasted. I will do anything that I can, through Scotland Yard, about the car, but for heaven's sake advertise nothing. You don't know how important complete secrecy is at this moment."

"I could word it so that no one else would know? My father would certainly miss the agony column, or I might try that."

"For God's sake, *no*, No, NO!" cried Margetson, much perturbed at the other end of the line. "Don't give the smallest hint to any living creature, beyond yourself and your brother, that I am not still hunting for Mr. Preston. I will make the country hum to find his car, but that does not matter. It is rather a good thing. It will look as if the police were still after him. I can't tell you how much depends on secrecy. Shall I meet you in London, if you can't come down here? I have to go up to-morrow to make enquiries. I might give you a further hint then of the direction my enquiries are taking. But I can't tell you by telephone, though I am speaking from Calverstoke on the police station line now."

"I wonder what on earth he is after," thought Anthony, but he consented to wait while a search was made for the car from Ely, or at all events until he could interview Margetson in London.

To Anthony's great astonishment, Margetson began by insisting on driving out, in Anthony's car, to a Surrey common, near Ashstead, before he would say anything at all. "There must be

absolutely no chance of our being overheard," he said, and would not allow the car to be stopped until they were on a by-road at the top of a hill with heather stretching away on each side of it, and the deep silence that means isolation hemming it in. There was little wind, the sky was blue and sunny, and in so treeless a place, not even a bird twittered. The main road was a mile away, and there was barely even a gorse bush within sight, only the soft, clean, undulating stretch of heather, not very high, and freshly green with the young shoots of May.

It was a lovely spot, and certainly as lonely a spot as could be found on a summer's day within easy reach of London. All this precaution was inclined to make Anthony laugh. He thought, as he had never thought before, that Margetson was nervous. What the devil was the man going to tell him? Was this only some curious method supposed to impress Anthony himself with the need for secrecy?

The story that Margetson told was strange enough indeed, though part of it was already known to all the world. In the spring of that year, almost immediately after the time that Eleanor Wentworth was murdered, great public excitement had been caused by a raid carried out by the police on the premises of "Arcos, Limited," a Russian trading company in Soviet House, London, in order to discover confidential documents, said to have been obtained by secret agents from certain British Government Offices; documents which contained

highly confidential official information. The search warrant for the raid was granted when it became known that one particular document had undoubtedly been conveyed to Soviet House by means which were yet untraced.

The document in question was not found, though others of almost as incriminating a character were discovered, but the Arcos Company, the Russian Trade Delegation, and the Soviet diplomatic officials all made great capital of the fact that the paper which caused the search to be instituted was not discovered, neither itself nor any of the photostat copies that were supposed to be made of all important papers and forwarded to Moscow. It seemed to be a most vital question whether the Soviet Government had received the information contained in that document, or not.

Margetson spoke in so low a whisper that Anthony could hardly hear him, "I found that paper in Miss Wentworth's room."

Anthony turned and stared at the man sitting next to him with much the same incredulity that he had felt when Margetson suggested that Robert Preston was the murderer of Eleanor. He wanted again to laugh. Why did the man always go off at such impossible angles, and with such preposterous solemnity?

"You found it? But how or why? Why didn't you say so before? Of course I don't know exactly what the paper was, but I do know that my cousin had nothing whatever to do with any current work at the Foreign Office. . . ."

"Hush-sh-sh!" said Margetson. He was evidently exceedingly nervous.

"But no one can possibly hear us," said Anthony impatiently. "I can tell you about the current work as an undoubted fact. Also, I can tell you for another undoubted fact that she never, in the whole course of her existence, took away official documents from the office. I was in a Government Office for a bit towards the end of the war and I know that it has been done, by officials who have urgent work in hand. They take it home with them. I don't pretend to criticise, but Eleanor had principles, rooted principles; she thought it wrong, nothing would have persuaded her to do anything of the kind. She would have preferred to stick in that little room of hers, scribbling for dear life, all day and all night, rather than carry anything out of the office. You can take that from me as a fact. She was like that, rather over-conscientious. I told you something of her earlier life, she was made that way, I suppose. Perhaps it was partly nervousness—she would have been afraid."

"But she had work with her; she was doing some official work that night?"

"You and I looked at her papers. There were only notes in her own writing, nothing of any importance whatever. She was putting together, in chronological order, *communiqués* on various subjects, already published. She had a lot of newspaper cuttings if I remember right?"

"So I thought. Certainly this paper was not in

the library when I went through her things the day after her death."

"Then I don't understand why you think now that she had it?"

"It was there—in her room—after the thieves, or whoever they were, had broken into it the other night."

"Where is it now?"

"At Scotland Yard."

"You are sure it is the missing paper?"

"Perfectly sure. Scotland Yard had the whole description of course, and directly after Miss Wentworth's death they sent me the number, because she had been working at the Foreign Office."

"But—how was it that you did not find it before?"

"I don't know. I went through everything in her bedroom. It must have been hidden in some remarkably ingenious way."

"But if that was what was wanted by the man who killed her, why did he again leave it behind?"

"I conclude that he was disturbed by Pratt and Crutcher, or that in his haste he did not see it, though he must have discovered the hiding place. Undoubtedly he was in a great hurry. The papers were scattered pell-mell all over the room. My immediate suspicions were that you—or possibly young Harper—were after the Colquhoun papers. I could understand that you might wish to remove all trace of any possible motive that Mr. Preston might have had for such a crime."

"It is the most incredible thing I ever heard—except your suspicions about my father."

"I can tell you something else. That docket was actually in Miss Wentworth's hands a few days before she left Town."

Anthony looked at the hard expressionless face next to him with considerable suspicion. Had Margetson taken leave of his senses? Did detectives sometimes get a case "on their nerves"? Was he inventing all this story to "save his own face," because the case against Robert Preston could not be proved? Could it be possibly a very ingenious put-up job to get hold of Robert again? It was a fact that if they had known where he was, his sons might have advised him to go back to his own house.

"Can you be sure of that?" Anthony asked.

"You can be sure of it yourself, by the evidence of your own eyes," said the detective, a little sullenly. He knew that Anthony was finding it hard to believe a word that he said. "If you like to come to Scotland Yard with me, I will show you Miss Wentworth's signature on the jacket or docket outside the document, following a minute in her own writing, dated, as I say, a few days before she went to Greystones."

"Do you mind telling me in what capacity she saw the paper?"

"I can't show you the document itself. You know how papers are circulated in a Government Office, and minuted on the docket. There was a question—I am not at liberty to explain it—but

a reference to another paper more than twenty years old was required, and it happened to be among those on which Miss Wentworth was working. She was asked to verify the reference, and minuted the docket, giving the number, date, and so on of the original."

"Presumably it was passed on to someone else? Who minuted it after she had it?"

"No one," said Margetson, briefly. "There is no record of its having passed through other hands."

"I would bet my bottom dollar," said Anthony, slowly, "that someone else took that document to Greystones, not Eleanor."

"My dear sir!" said Margetson, "why should they?"

"Have you seen her people at the Foreign Office?"

"I have indeed. I interviewed her superiors in the Office and they declared the same complete confidence that you have in Miss Wentworth, and to prove it I was given every facility to cross-examine her colleagues, her typist, her messenger, anyone who might have taken that paper from her room. They declared that as usual she left everything very carefully locked up, no papers in her trays, everything in order."

"I suppose the docket was marked to go to someone?"

"Yes, in the ordinary course it would go back to the higher official who had asked the question, but he never received it. I gather that before her death

they had begun to have suspicions and decided on the Arcos raid. If I remember right, Mr. Preston had to fill up a form stating that at the time of her death Miss Wentworth had no official documents in her possession, but it was purely formal. No one imagined for a moment that she had taken the paper. When the raid was instituted it was supposed to have been stolen on its way from her to Sir John Davidson, who had sent it to her."

"John Davidson? Oh, I know, the F.O. cipher expert. But he never had anything to do with Eleanor?"

"No, as I tell you, the paper went to her merely to be checked with the former paper that she had."

"Are you watching any of these people?"

"Of course, especially the messenger, but he is a very decent fellow, a disabled soldier. He said that he had not seen it, and supposed that she took it back to Sir John herself. His secretary brought it to her, not the messenger. Yes, I am having the secretary watched, but he is a permanent official, of some standing. I think he is practically above suspicion. You see it is a damning fact that the paper has been found actually among Miss Wentworth's belongings." He did not add that to his mind it was a very damning fact. He had not yet satisfied himself that Eleanor was completely beyond suspicion, in spite of the honour in which she appeared to be held. She was dead, and men have a superstitious horror of speaking evil of the dead, so thought Margetson. He thought also

with his wide and cynical experience of human weakness, that money is a powerful lever, and the Soviet or Arcos agents had money to burn.

"A damning fact? In what way damning? If she had the paper she seems to have defended it with her life."

"But she had it in her possession, that is what I mean," Margetson hesitated, and then went on, "To tell you the truth, at first I suspected that you had found the paper, and by way of preserving Miss Wentworth's reputation for being utterly trustworthy, you had concealed it, not realizing its importance. Then when all this business about Arcos came to light, you thought it might be the key to the mystery of her death, and therefore shuffled it back under cover of another break into the house, hoping also in that manner, no doubt, to divert attention from Mr. Preston."

"I wish you would not be so ingenious," said Anthony, holding his head with both hands, "it is such tortuous reasoning! Even if Eleanor had had an official document with her, I should not have thought it criminal, though I should have been greatly surprised. As you say, I might have suspected that it gave a clue to the mystery, but that would have been no reason for me to conceal it, rather the contrary."

"I know, I apologize, but you are rather ingenious, you know."

"My ingeniousness is very simple," said Anthony, "rather of the schoolboy type. . . . Yes, I realize that you find it hardest of all to excuse the

Z 17, but go on ! Why have you changed your mind ? "

" Because I know that you and Miss Preston were at Devonport that night, also your brother and Wilkins. Pratt and Crutcher are not clever enough to have brought off the housebreaking in the professional manner in which it was done. I took steps to find out your whereabouts at once. I discovered that you and Wilkins drove straight back to Devonport, after you landed from the Z 17. You knew that you would have nothing to fear from such a poor crumpled-up remnant of a man as I was that night. Since then I have discovered further evidence. No, I can't explain at present what it was. This is not a matter only of the murder of a private individual, however regrettable, it is mixed up with important public affairs. Sometimes I fear that we shall never get to the bottom of it. These international rogues are practically beyond our reach. We have put the Government secret service fellows on to it now, but I have very little hope."

" I thought that Scotland Yard had a private searchlight turned on to every creature in the country with a drop of Russian blood in his veins —or even Russian boots on her feet—shall we say ? "

" Perhaps ! It would be a bigger job than you think, but we have no searchlights powerful enough to show up all the employés and agents who work, perhaps indirectly, for the Soviet. A number of them are no more Russian than you or I. Half

the wretches who get hold of Government papers, God knows how, have no idea who wants them. Perhaps you will now understand why I don't wish my information to be broadcasted ? "

" I give it up," said Anthony, " though, especially after your aspersions on my father's character, I shall be deeply disappointed if the real murderer is not discovered. I have always felt what a cursed, callous brute he was. It would give me enormous satisfaction to give him the fright of his life, the damned scoundrel ! "

" Vengeance," said Margetson, slowly and heavily, " is——"

" Go on," said Anthony, " vengeance is—— ? "

" Very disappointing," the other man answered, " though I should have enjoyed inflicting the third degree on all of you in the Z 17."

" It was rather a shame ! The M.O. doctored your drink with a bit too heavy a hand."

" Doctored my drink—on purpose ? Oh, that was it, was it ? I wondered. That boy said it was something to cure sea-sickness. The brute ! I was not sure what an M.O. was—— Good God—Preston—what is that moving in the heather over there ? "

" A Slav, no doubt," said Anthony coolly, as he started the car ; " if we are going to discuss naval doctors I vote that we go on——"

But Margetson refused to do anything of the kind. He had to find out what was shaking the heather, and until he had marked down a crouching hare, on her way to her form in the nearest wood,

he would not allow himself to be restored to equanimity.

"He has got it on his nerves," thought Anthony. "I expect he ought to be relieved from the case. He is in as bad a funk as even poor Eleanor was. Of course he knows that these Bolshevik fellows stick at nothing. I wonder if he will ever discover anybody or anything. He is ready to shy at his own shadow."

Margetson did not tell Anthony that he had been making intensive enquiries about Eleanor Wentworth, in every sort of direction and going a long way back. You never knew, he considered, who might be preying on a solitary woman. Against his will, almost, he had been forced into a sort of respect for a feminine type hitherto completely outside his experience. In his private life he had little to do with the other sex; it was a long time since he had come to the conclusion that if he meant to make a success of his profession he must eschew the company of women. He had married young, chiefly as a matter of business, his wife had died after a few years, leaving no children, and he had practically forgotten her. All his interests were bound up in his profession. There was no softening or disturbing influence in his life.

It was only to be expected that a man so concentrated and one-ideaed as he was should find such a woman as Eleanor Wentworth unusual and almost incomprehensible. She had lived a life practically in three watertight compartments, which encroached on each other very little, if at all. He had known

men, but never before a woman, who could do it. She seemed to be as entirely devoid of emotional or sexual complications as he was himself. Through what deep waters she had passed to arrive at that stage he could not find out, beyond the few hints that Anthony had given him, but he guessed at their existence. He was convinced that she had not been without attraction for men, yet certainly for the last fifteen or twenty years of her life, probably since she was thirty or thereabouts, she had lived a self-contained existence, working very hard, as it were in two dimensions. In her official life, she did important, laborious historical and archival work, and in her literary life, she seemed to find rest and amusement in writing novels, memoirs, reviews, even poetry, a considerable output for one whose days were spent in tireless work of a different nature. Although, unlike Anthony Trollope, whose official labours had not been tinged with literary effort, her historical research was not without a literary character.

The third division of her life had been given up to her friends and relations. It was true that her nearest and dearest no longer lived to claim her devotion, but she clung to those who, though less closely linked, were yet her own people.

Margetson found that her relations, and even her closest friends, hardly realized the different sides of her life. She resisted no claims on her time or attention that she could possibly meet, and though not secretive, she was naturally reserved, very independent, and apparently she confided in very

few. In all her relationships she was essentially robust. She was sympathetic but not sentimental, and she "consumed her own smoke." The friends of her literary life were not her official colleagues, and they all seemed to be practically unconscious of any aspect of her character which did not come within their own purview.

In fact the Mrs. Danvers whom she had made her literary executor was practically the only friend who knew and understood her from every angle. It may be imagined that Margetson had driven poor Mrs. Danvers almost out of her mind by his enquiries and suggestions. He had been originally astonished by the varying sources from which sprang the notices of Eleanor's life and work that had been published after her death. A distinguished historian had written of her careful, scholarly, accomplished work for history, known only to a few. More than one well-known critic had mentioned with appreciation and understanding her other work and her literary gifts, and her own family had been rather naïvely astonished. None the less they had been ready to sing praises of the affectionate, sympathetic Eleanor that they had known, her humorous enjoyment of life and small amusements. As an example of this attitude Anthony had told Margetson about her official job, but had rarely mentioned her literary interests.

Margetson could not exactly call her mysterious, but he felt certain that there was some key to her whole life on which he could not lay his hands. He resented both her versatility and her

reserve ; it gave him so much trouble to rake up any fact that might shed a light on the mystery, not merely of her death, but of this extraordinary complication with the missing official document.

If he could discover that she needed money urgently, desperately, for herself or another, it might offer some explanation of her possession of the incriminating paper. The man who had proved to be her murderer might have intended to buy the document, and when she refused to let him have it, had killed her in a moment of ungovernable anger, possibly also in self-defence, thinking that she would rouse the household or telephone to the police; but he had failed to find the paper he wanted.

That sounded plausible, and accounted for the second effort, but not for the fact that the paper had remained in her possession. If she meant to sell it, why had she refused at the last moment ? Why had it been necessary for the Arcos agent to break into the house where she was staying ? If she had not meant to sell it, why had she brought it away with her, and how did the murderer know that she had it ?

It had occurred to Margetson, though he did not confide the suspicion to Anthony, that the man who had come for that paper found her already dead, killed by her uncle, as the detective had originally supposed ; but he hesitated, the long arm of coincidence seemed to be stretched too far, and it was impossible even to the in-

grained suspiciousness of the detective's mind, to imagine that Robert Preston was in league with Arcos !

Again he went back in his mind to Eleanor, trying to find the motive that might be the key to the whole affair. Her means were small—money was certainly the most obvious motive, he could not think of any other—but she earned enough to live a simple frugal sort of life in a modest flat, with one old servant, who seemed absolutely crushed by her death. She had, evidently enough, refined and cultivated tastes, which she could not indulge, but her extravagances were not of a kind to require drastic efforts to meet. She had involved herself in the affairs of no one else, no promises to pay for the extravagance or misfortunes of another, no foolish speculations, or gambling, not even any sort of literary venture that might have led to expense. She did not even play bridge. Probably she would have made a greater success if she had ventured more. As Anthony had said, she always played for "safety first," she was afraid—nervous—and that again seemed to queer the pitch, thought Margetson. He knew very well that for anyone of Eleanor's mentality and experience to sin against the "Official Secrets Act" required courage of a higher order than the bravery of the ignorant, as well as a preponderating motive which he could not find out.

There was absolutely nothing that Margetson could discover to account for the fact that a document, of which the loss had apparently caused in-

ternational complications, had been in her private possession.

He thought of all this, as he and Anthony drove back to London, but he could form no conclusions.*

. . . . . .

"Have you found any trace yet of my father's car?" Anthony asked. "That is apparently going to be as great a mystery as the other. To tell you the truth I am beginning to get the wind up about it."

"We will go to Scotland Yard on our way back if you like, and ask. I have not heard anything yet. There are quite a few cars in England you know, and their numbers can only be traced with difficulty."

Anthony grunted. "I have lost my childhood's faith in most things," he remarked, "but I still believed in the police . . . until now. Are you going to tell me that an old man, over eighty, with a crocky heart, can evade them, all by himself, with this astonishing facility, though they know the number of his car and the date of the letter that his chauffeur certainly posted at Cambridge?"

Margetson laughed. "Hunting for a car nowadays is a great deal worse than hunting for a needle in a haystack. Of course I've had the roads from Cambridge to London watched; there are several ways that you can come, but we were probably too late. The chauffeur's letter was two days old when we heard about it. I know you have made your own enquiries at likely places in London.

* The whole of this story of the missing document is pure fiction.

But we have no clue at all to his road out of Town. If the car is in a private garage and not on the roads we shall have great difficulty in tracing it."

They arrived at Scotland Yard, and Anthony followed the detective through labyrinthine passages to an ordinary sort of office room, lofty and airy, overlooking the river, full of desks, at which clerks, some in plain clothes, sat working, surrounded by filing cabinets, ingenious pigeon-holes, telephone receivers. From a door at one end of the room came the sound of clacking typewriters, and at the other end they passed into a smaller room, where a man, who seemed to be of greater importance than the industrious clerks, got up to greet Margetson, and saluted him with the conscious smile of success.

"We have found the car, sir, AT 5091. It is garaged at a place called Blanesburgh in Lincolnshire, arrived there two days after you sent us the number. Party is staying at the Rectory, but they hadn't room for the car."

"Blanesburgh," said Anthony, "why the devil should he go there? I have never heard of it before. Who is the Rector? Do you know his name?"

The superintendent turned over a small file of papers, already on his desk. "We had most of it by telephone," he said. "Yes, here it is—the Rev. Arthur Lambert."

"The car is still there, I suppose," said Anthony, "and presumably Mr. Preston is still at the Rectory?"

"Mr. Preston? Wait a bit, that was not the

name given. No, Mr. and Mrs. Archer—James Archer—and daughter."

"My last illusion gone!" cried Anthony, in a tone of not unreasonable exasperation. "You have tracked the wrong car."

"We have tracked the number you gave us," said the superintendent.

CHAPTER IX

The garage at Ely repeated obstinately, when rung up by Scotland Yard, that AT 5091 was the number of the car in which Robert Preston had departed from the hallowed precincts of the Bishop's palace.

"They would, of course," said the superintendent, "no garage would admit that it had given a wrong number."

"But that girl," said Anthony, "must have known the number of the car that her young man was driving?"

He had already explained how he had heard that his father had, in the first instance, gone to Cambridge.

"The thing would be to get hold of the girl, on the quiet, outside the garage," suggested the superintendent.

"It must have been her mistake," said Anthony; "she gave us the number." He took out of his pocket a letter case in which he found the original Fitzwilliam bill-form with the number of the car on it in the young woman's writing, and below that her address, added by Anthony himself when she gave it to him afterwards.

"Perhaps the chauffeur put her up to it. What

was his name ? " asked the superintendent, with his pencil poised ready for the answer.

" George Green," said Anthony, rather unwillingly; he found that he had taken a great dislike to the process of having all his remarks entered in a notebook. It occurred to him that the publication of a notebook compiled by a superintendent of police might cause more scandal and excitement than even the most indiscreet and racy of Society diaries. He then gave, also unwillingly, the name of the girl clerk, Clare Entwhistle.

" I suppose you think they are agents of Arcos or something of that kind," he said to Margetson, as they went down in the lift.

" Very likely," said Margetson, laughing, as at a good joke, but directly they were in Anthony's car again, he said peremptorily, " For God's sake, Preston, don't talk casually about Arcos in public places, as if it had any connection with our business. There were two strangers in the lift with us. You don't seem to understand that they have spies—or agents, if you like that word better—everywhere."

" Even in Scotland Yard ? You amaze me," said Anthony, but his tone was contemptuous.

" All the same, why should that young woman have given you the wrong number ? "

" Well, it is rather a habit of young women to give one the wrong number," laughed Anthony, who had recovered his temper, " and when enwrapt in love's young dream, some people are remarkably absent-minded."

"Pooh!" said Margetson, "a fiver from some agent' as you call them, produces a convenient absence of mind, far more readily than any amount of love's young dream."

"Is that the answer of experience; were you ever in love, Margetson?" asked Anthony, with a twinkle in his eye.

"Not with a Russian, anyhow," said the detective.

"You don't mean that this mystery about my father has anything to do with a Russian?"

"I should not be surprised," Margetson answered.

"I should, emphatically," said Anthony, and began to laugh again, "you don't think that he has eloped with a Russian?"

"More likely that a Russian has eloped with him," said Margetson. "I must say it seems as if the wrong number were deliberate."

He looked frowning and intent. "I don't like it," he said at last. "I know what you thought of me because I suspected Mr. Preston of the murder, but I don't want any harm to happen to him."

"You only did your damnedest to get him hanged," said Anthony. "I thought that I—or rather he—had not a leg to stand on in court that day at Calverstoke. They'd have committed him for trial all right if he'd been there."

"That was purely professional. This is personal. I hope he has not met with any foul play."

"I can't see any motive for it. No one could connect him with Eleanor's official documents."

"Someone may have thought that he knew where the document was. Very few women are so—detached—as Miss Wentworth seems to have been. An old man alone is much at the mercy of his chauffeur."

"Good God!" said Anthony, "you make me very anxious. What can we do about it? Suppose we advertise for George Green?"

"That would give the show away at once. I don't suppose for a moment that his name is George Green. It sounds like an assumed name anyhow, too thoroughly infantile and simple. No, we must get hold of that girl. The so-called Green has probably posted Mr. Preston's letters in his own pocket. He has done very well, as far as that goes. We have completely lost sight of Mr. Preston."

"You give me cold shivers," said Anthony. "Do you remember that my father is eighty? He is not fit to struggle with Bolshevik chauffeurs in uncertain quarters of the globe . . . or even of this our England . . . I know! I will go to his bankers. The oldest and best or the youngest and most Bolshevik of us can't do without cheques."

Margetson eyed him coldly, "I did that long ago. He paid the garage by cheque, and cashed a cheque for himself for forty pounds the day before he left Ely, and he has had nothing since then."

"That is more than a week ago. Forty pounds won't last long if he is staying at hotels with a car and a shover."

"No, but if he has transferred himself to another bishop's palace, it might last some time?"

"I guess that he is fed up with bishops' palaces, or at all events with their chaplains and their chaplains' wives," Anthony answered. "Let me think, where would he be likely to go? I know he is not with my sister or with any near relation. In fact I have had already to tell a few lies about him to some of them."

"Old friends?" suggested Margetson, hopefully.

"We must remember that he thinks he is still fleeing from justice; not that he ever took that very seriously. We have cousins down in Cornwall, Evan Day, you know, but the Days bore him more than a bit. He would not go from Scylla to Charybdis."

"But if you don't think he takes his flight from justice, as you call it, very seriously, why did he leave Ely? I imagined that he got frightened there, saw someone who looked like me, perhaps. . . ."

"Nothing of the kind. The chaplain bored him. There you have it in a nutshell, my father all over . . . and a saint would be bored by that fellow Underwood."

"I gather that the Bishop puts up with him?"

"Harold Eliensis is a saint, if ever there was one. He dwells in a world apart. Appeal to his love or his pity, and you couldn't bore him if you tried for a hundred years. For some reason or other he is sorry for Underwood—they were at Winchester together, I believe—but my father, well, after all,

why should he permit himself to be rubbed sore by Harold's particular form of sackcloth next the skin? I have my doubts if his doctor did not send even Harold to sea to free him from his old man on land."

"Can you think of anyone else that Mr. Preston might like to visit?"

"He has one cousin, who lives abroad, to whom he has always been devoted. She is very much attached to him—yes, that is just her way of putting it. By Jove! It would be rather sporting of him! Perhaps he has gone out to her. She lives in some remote spot near one of the smaller Italian lakes."

"If the garage at Ely isn't playing a double game, they'd know if he had taken their car out of England—licence, insurance, passport for the chauffeur—I can find out what cars have been shipped to Italy in the last week, if you think it is worth while?"

Anthony sighed. "He would never take all that trouble. I know he wouldn't, not for any amount of pursuing justice. Well—there are my mother's people; one of her nephews has a place in Scotland, Berwickshire. That's the ticket! My father is rather fond of Rowley Maxwell. Someone had better get into touch with him at once."

"You can do that, send him a wire. That won't give anything away. But haven't you any more ecclesiastical relations nearer at hand, any more bishops or deans?"

Anthony laughed, but that evening he sent off a sheaf of telegrams, without telling Margetson; in fact he was "getting the wind up" more than he allowed. This independent proceeding was so extremely unlike his father. Suppose those blighted Arcos people imagined that he had gone off with the incriminating document? It was only at that moment Anthony remembered that after all he had not seen the document at Scotland Yard.

Why had Margetson omitted to show it to him?

The next morning he went off by himself to Ely, leaving Molly to open the reply telegrams, and to let him know if there were any news.

He arrived at Ely in the afternoon, and went straight to Fitzwilliam's, where the owner recognized him, and was ready to be sympathetic about his failure to trace Mr. Preston's car.

"The week's just up," said Fitzwilliam, "we ought to hear from Mr. Preston or Green shortly."

"What is the slip-up about the number?" asked Anthony. "Scotland Yard traced the number you gave me, and it proves to be a private car belonging to a Mr. Archer."

"I know, they rang me up yesterday. I think the mistake must be theirs. I can show you my ledger."

But as it happened, Anthony never saw that ledger, because the girl clerk who had originally given him the number, suddenly came into the office, with a telegram in her hand, shaking like a leaf. In the midst of his own preoccupation

Anthony was sorry for her. She was so evidently in desperate distress. "Oh, sir," she said to Fitzwilliam, "Oh, sir!" and then choked, as she held out the telegram to him.

Fitzwilliam frowned at her. The private griefs of his clerical assistants ought to be under better control. "Not now, Miss Entwhistle," he said, waving her away, "I have business with this gentleman. You can come in later."

"I can wait," said the father of daughters. "Miss Entwhistle has a telegram—urgent—bad news—I am sorry."

"It is about George," she said, gasping, as she recognized Anthony. "Oh, sir, have you heard? He was with Mr. Preston."

A freezing wave of fear flowed over Anthony; all that his father had ever meant to him seemed to rise in his mind at once. What could the girl mean—an accident? "Let me see the telegram," he said, as Fitzwilliam took it rather grudgingly from the young woman's hand.

"I ought to have heard about an accident," Fitzwilliam complained, as he looked at the flimsy bit of paper and passed it on to Anthony, shrugging his shoulders. It ran:

> "Green, 7 Court Street, Ely. Come at once, your son dangerously ill, fear consequences. Medical officer, county hospital, Calverstoke."

"Mrs. Green—George's mother—brought it. She wants me to go with her. Please, sir, may I go? There's a train at six. We must go to-night."

She was fighting pluckily for self-control, and Anthony, impulsive as ever, caught her hand. "Steady!" he said, "I am in this too. If it was an accident, what has happened to my father? I'll take you—you and George's mother. I have my car here. It's a long way, but we can get there to-night. Hurry up, get what you want, and tell Mrs. Green that I will come"—he looked at the telegram—"to Court Street in half an hour."

"Calverstoke—now what the deuce are they doing at Calverstoke?" he thought, but said nothing to show his wonder.

Fitzwilliam nodded to the girl and she went away, murmuring shy gratitude. Evidently he did not like being hustled, but probably he was not really hard-hearted, and there was something about Anthony that no one could gainsay.

"That for your A.T. 5091 at Blanesburgh!" Anthony observed, and watched Fitzwilliam. Was the man a rogue in the pay of Arcos, as Margetson had suggested? But Fitzwilliam's perfectly ordinary blunt countenance remained unmoved. "There was a mistake somewhere," he said, as if it were a matter of little consequence. He went and looked at the card index, and came back again and looked at a ledger. Then his face lightened, "It's Miss Entwhistle's writing that's done it. It ought to be A.F. 5091. She makes bad F's, they look like T's."

"Well, upon my soul!" said Anthony. He remembered that the girl had given him only the written number, she had never said what it was.

He could not complain bitterly, though it would have relieved his feelings, because he was sorry for the idiotic girl, whose mistake might have cost her lover's life. If the police had found the car sooner, possibly they might have cut short its journey and prevented the accident. Anthony, very naturally, had made up his mind that there had been an accident. His only hope was that possibly his father had escaped, or had not been in the car at the time. Fitzwilliam was inclined to think that an accident was impossible, because the police would have let him know, before anyone else could hear.

All the same he could not explain why George Green should be lying in a precarious state in the Calverstoke hospital. "That was a good car," he muttered, as Anthony turned to go away, "a very good car. It belonged to Sir James Molyneux; I bought it because her ladyship wanted a Rolls; good as new it was. Sir James was very particular about his chauffeurs, no lick and promise there. They had to look after their cars as if they was alive, or they heard about it—you bet yer life they did. Sir James wasn't mealy-mouthed, not by any manner of means. That was a beautiful car. I will say for Green that he was a good driver too, slick but not too slick, he was careful, but not nervous. I'd have trusted any car with Green. It wasn't his fault, I'd put any money on that . . . if there was an accident."

"I will let you know," said Anthony, coldly.

Of course the man was thinking of the insurance,

not of the safety of life or limb of anyone in the car, passenger or driver, but his attitude was intolerable to the man to whom insurance meant nothing, the safety of the passenger everything.

"Thank you, sir," said Fitzwilliam.

Apparently it did not occur to him to express gratitude for the help offered to Miss Entwhistle, but something in Anthony's face made him repeat again, "I don't believe there was an accident."

"Good day!" said Anthony.

"Rather a high-handed gent," thought Fitzwilliam, and decided to ring up the police at Calverstoke. He gave the right number of the car, and asked if there had been any accident in the district during the last few days, but he could not get much out of them. They would make enquiries and let him know.

Anthony had not thought of consulting the local police, but he rang up Molly when he got back to his hotel, and asked for news.

She could only tell him that all his telegrams had drawn blank. "Where can Grandpapa be?" she asked, with more than a suspicion of tears in her voice. Molly was beginning to be rattled.

He did not like to tell her such news as he had, because of his apprehension of the tragedy that might lie behind it. He only said that he was going to Greystones and would ring her up again next day.

"Why are you going all that way?" she asked anxiously, "don't get lost too, Daddy, oh Daddy, don't!"

"No fear," said Anthony contemptuously. "Bye-bye, ducky," and rang off.

As he said that he was going to Greystones, he understood what his father had been doing at Calverstoke. Regardless of pursuing "justice," he was on his way home.

CHAPTER X

In the years to come Anthony looked back on that long and weary expedition from Ely to Calverstoke as one of the most exasperating episodes in the nightmare that had begun with the murder of Eleanor.

He was very sorry indeed, as who would not be sorry, for Green's mother and the girl to whom he was engaged, after the receipt of that most alarming telegram, but Anthony was accustomed to the generation of women who had sat tight-lipped and dry-eyed under the heavy rain of blows they had received during the war. He did not expect poor Mrs. Green to be a Lady Frederick Cavendish, ready at once to acknowledge that the Prime Minister, who was also her own uncle, had done right in sending her husband to Ireland—and his death. But he was not prepared for Mrs. Green's state of tears and collapse, varied only by anger and a steady stream of lachrymose abuse of Fitzwilliam. Certainly Fitzwilliam had not shown himself of a sympathetic disposition, he thought more of his property and his insurance than of his driver. He had hardly told Miss Entwhistle that he was sorry, although accident or no accident, the unfortunate George was apparently dying, but under no circumstances

could any responsibility for his condition be attributed to Fitzwilliam, as far as Anthony could see.

Mrs. Green evidently thought otherwise. All through that dreary afternoon, and it rained a steady grey drizzle all the way, taking every atom of light and colour out of the countryside, she wept and sobbed, and had to be revived with smelling salts and salvolatile, which Miss Entwhistle mercifully had with her. Anthony thought of offering her some brandy that he had in the car, but was afterwards glad that he had refrained, because it might have excited her still more. When she felt better she gave vent to a steady outpour of vituperation of Fitzwilliam. Sometimes she seemed to be cursing him, his ancestors, his family and his belongings in an almost patriarchal manner. Evidently she had some old, old grievance against him. It was not only the present misfortune that she laid at his door. Yet Fitzwilliam had most pointedly praised young Green, and refrained from any reflection on his character as a driver. Of course that might be only with a view to obtaining damages if there had been a collision with another car, thought Anthony.

About half-way to Calverstoke, at the little village of Asterley, which Anthony happened to know, he had to stop for more petrol, went to the inn and sent the two women to have some tea.

In ordinary circumstances Anthony would not have minded having tea with them himself, but Mrs. Green was too much for his patience. Somehow or other her acid revilings had suggested that Fitzwilliam in some mysterious way had inveigled

young Green into nefarious doings, and had then "turned upon him." The upshot, as far as could be made out, was that Green was driving for Fitzwilliam at much too low a wage, because of the "hold" that he had on the young man. Anthony once more began to think very uncomfortably about Arcos.

After tea Miss Entwhistle slipped out by herself and spoke to Anthony as he stood by the car waiting for his passengers.

"I hope you don't mind her, sir," she said. "I'm very sorry you've heard all this, sir, but it is nothing. She's fair dazed with grief. George is her only son, her only child. She don't know what she is saying. George would be angry if he could hear her. I've given her some aspirin now."

"All right," said Anthony, "but look here, Miss Entwhistle, what is her grudge against Fitzwilliam? Has he injured George in any way?"

He asked bluntly, although it was not his business, and he would not have asked but for that lurking suspicion; he was getting as bad as Margetson, he thought, seeing everything in a distorted light.

She shrank away from him a little. "It does not matter really. It is only a society he's joined—and Mrs. Green doesn't like it; she does not think it's respectable. . . . Here she is, sir, ought we to be getting on?"

Mrs. Green spoke more quietly. "It is very kind of you, sir. I am sore distraught, but you've

children of your own, sir, and I've only the one."

She sighed heavily as she climbed into the car again. Anthony saw that she was well wrapped up, told her to shut her eyes and perhaps she would get a sleep, and so they drove on. She did not talk any more, possibly she did go to sleep, but poor little Miss Entwhistle cried, in a quiet snivelling fashion that drove Anthony to almost worse distraction. She had been very self-possessed while she tried to soothe the frantic mother, and when she attempted to apologize for Mrs. Green to Anthony by the inn door. He knew that she did not want him to hear that she was crying. He thought of the tears in Molly's voice that he could hear even on the telephone, "Oh, Daddy, don't get lost too!" These young creatures attempted to be aggressively self-reliant and hardy, but in the end—life was too much for them. He never could bear to hear his children cry, and this girl was only a child. He was not much moved by Mrs. Green's girnings.

He found himself wondering what Margetson would do under the circumstances and what sort of sheerly cynical deductions he would make. "Has George joined a trades union or a secret society? I suppose Margetson would find out that it was Russian, or the Third International, or something thoroughly 'Red.'"

He decided to take a short cut that he knew, off the main road as they approached Calverstoke, but it was rather rough going, and of course one of

his tyres exploded with a loud bang. There was no help for it; his passengers had to wait in such patience as they might, while he put on the spare wheel. It was getting dark when he had finished, and he was sorry that he had turned off the main road. By the time that he drove up to the hospital it was nearly ten o'clock. The night porter recognised Anthony; took the telegram that the medical officer had sent to Mrs. Green, and came back with a broad smile, "It's all right, sir, George Green is asleep and doing well. Please come this way."

Anthony knew the hospital very well, because his mother had always taken a great interest in it, and the night sister who appeared to interview them was not a stranger. She said that Green was asleep. Yes, of course, if they wished, Dr. Medwin, the medical superintendent, would see them. He had sent for Mrs. Green, because her address had been found in her son's pocket, and when the telegram was dispatched it was uncertain whether Green would live through the night, but there was no danger now, he was all right.

"Was it an accident?" Anthony was seething with impatience, and could wait no longer, he had to ask.

The sister looked surprised. "An accident? Well, I suppose you might say it was."

Then a nurse appeared, and asked Mrs. Green to go to Dr. Medwin's room. Anthony followed her, but Miss Entwhistle remained with the sister. Dr. Medwin, who looked like the "doctor in boots"

of the old hunting song, greeted them with further reassurance, "Green is quite all right now. I am sorry I frightened you," he said to Mrs. Green, "but it was touch and go. I was not sure that we should pull him through."

"Was it an accident, sir?" Poor Mrs. Green asked the question this time.

"Well—it might have been. We can't tell yet."

"How was he injured?" asked Anthony, who could not understand this uncertainty—"it might have been."

"Injured? He would have died if we had not got him here in time."

"Can I see him, sir?" asked Mrs. Green.

"I think not, to-night—better not. He is sleeping now, naturally and quietly. I don't want him to wake up. He has had a rotten time, poor lad!"

Mrs. Green, of course, began to cry, and to say that she had come all that way to see George—sniff—and now she wasn't allowed to see him—sniff—it couldn't hurt him to let his mother—sniff—see him. She wouldn't wake him up—sniff—

Beyond sniffing she did not make a noise; Anthony waited for Fitzwilliam's name to be brought into the complaint, and Dr. Medwin looked worried. Then he spoke through a telephone on the table, "Ask Nurse Bodley to come here."

He turned to Mrs. Green, "Can you keep quite quiet? Don't cry or make a sound? Nurse Bodley will take you to have a peep at him. You will see

that he is quite comfortable. To-morrow you can come and he will be able to talk to you."

Nurse Bodley, when she appeared, was given the same directions, accompanied by some cabalistic signs from the doctor, which she evidently understood perfectly; so did Anthony, and probably so did Mrs. Green, who turned off her tears as if by a tap, and with a slightly less crushed appearance, you could hardly call it a triumphant air, followed the nurse out of the room.

"I don't want her to wake him," said Dr. Medwin, "but these women are more sensible than you'd think. She'll probably only talk to him as if he were a baby, and tell him to go to sleep again."

"You know more of the *genus* than I do," said Anthony, "but I've driven that woman all the way from Ely, and I haven't discovered a grain of sense in her yet."

"That was very good of you," said Dr. Medwin, "May I ask if you know the family well?"

"I've never seen Mrs. Green till to-day, and I've never seen Green at all."

Anthony rather enjoyed mystifying the burly doctor, who stared at him with some astonishment. "Did you just pick her up on the road?" he asked. "She was not trying to walk here, poor wretch, was she?"

"No, I know something of the girl who is engaged to Green, and I happened to be at Ely when your telegram came. I'll explain presently, but I

want to hear how Green was hurt—was it an accident ? "

" Hurt ? The fellow had an overdose of sleeping draught. This morning I thought it a fatal overdose. I'd sooner have died myself than go through all we put him through. Do you know what a stomach pump is like ? "

" Good Lord, yes, don't describe it to me. I was in hospital once or twice during the war. But—sleeping draught—where was he ? "

" At the *Thorell Arms*. You know, just round the corner. Old James, the landlord, said he was a chauffeur, but we couldn't stop to find out anything about him. We had to get him here in double quick time. James had the sense to send for me and a stretcher at the same time. It wasn't worth while to send the ambulance."

" Do chauffeurs often take sleeping draughts, or do you think it was foul play ? "

Dr. Medwin thought that Anthony was extraordinarily interested—almost moved—by this story. He took it so seriously.

" I don't know. I telephoned to the police, as a precaution, because I thought the chap was going to die. I haven't heard what they found out."

" Do you think he will be able to tell you himself to-morrow ? "

" Probably, if he can remember. Sometimes they can't, in these cases, after a strong go of the stuff."

" What was the dope ? "

The doctor gave him a Latin name which conveyed little to Anthony.

"Opium, I suppose? Rather dangerous?"

"Yes, it's a preparation of opium. We don't use it much here. It's French—it ought to be very carefully measured. I should say he wasn't used to it, and took a double dose. It's quite tasteless. I don't know how he got it. People will play tricks with these things."

"I feel a bit rattled," Anthony confessed, "because the fellow was driving for my father."

"Your father—Mr. Preston of Greystones? Well, upon my word! I thought he always had his own chauffeur—what's his name—his wife was here not long ago—Wilkins?"

"My father has been away, staying at Ely, with his cousin, the Bishop. He hired a car to drive back from there. Of course, I suppose—" Anthony wondered what he did suppose—he wasn't going to give away anything to Dr. Medwin, known as the greatest gossip in the county, outside anything to do with his own profession, "I suppose my father had dismissed him, and the fellow was on his way back to Ely."

"Oh, of course," said Dr. Medwin, a little uncomfortably. Stories may be kept out of the local rag, but they can't be kept off local tongues. Dr. Medwin had heard a great deal more than all about the scene in court when Anthony had "represented" his father. It would have been incredible to Anthony, but the thought did flash into the doctor's mind that old Preston had

been accused of one murder, was this an attempt at another ?

Anthony explained, " You will understand why I was alarmed when I saw your wire at Ely. Naturally I thought that there had been an accident. You did not say what was the matter with Green. I was confoundedly anxious about my father. He is an old man, you know."

" I hope he is all right," said the doctor, " anyhow there was no accident on the road."

" Had Green garaged his car at the *Thorell Arms* ? "

" I don't know. The police could tell you."

At that moment there was a knock at the door, and Nurse Bodley appeared. " Mrs. Green and the young woman are ready to go," she said, " but they wanted to see Mr. Preston first, if he did not mind. They don't know where to go for the night. It is rather late. No, sir," to the doctor, " Mrs. Green did not wake her son."

Anthony looked aghast. The difficulty had not occurred to him. He was blessed if he was going to take them to Greystones; he knew very little about them really.

" You'd better take them to the *Thorell Arms*," said Dr. Medwin. " Old James knows you. He'll probably have a room. It's quite a respectable place."

Anthony thanked him, and having collected the two women, now in a much calmer and more hopeful frame of mind, he drove them round to the *Thorell Arms*.

But it was not so easy as Dr. Medwin had suggested. The *Thorell Arms* was in darkness, everyone had gone to bed, and it was a long time before there was any answer to their knocking and ringing. Old James himself at last put his head out of a window. "No good," he said, in answer to Anthony's shouted request for a room, "I'm full up. I couldn't take in a man nor a mouse, much less two ladies."

"Just come down for a minute, will you," said Anthony, "you might tell me where to go. You know me, James, Anthony Preston—Greystones."

The name had some effect, for James came down, and after considerable fumbling, opened the door. Anthony went into the house and talked to him, told him who the women were, and asked what he knew about Mr. Preston.

James knew nothing. Green had said that his "boss" was staying in the town, and that he was going on next day. James had not even heard that Green was driving Mr. Preston. The man in charge at the garage said that Green had come in very early that morning, had paid what was owing at the garage, and had taken away the car. It must have been some other man, because a little later, the boots, who had been told to call Green, found him insensible in his bed, and James had immediately sent for Dr. Medwin.

"No, I can't take in anybody, very sorry, sir," when Anthony offered to pay in advance, "I'd do it to oblige you, sir, if I could, but I've even got two men sleeping in the bar-parlour."

"Where can I take the poor things?" asked Anthony. "I can't very well disturb my friends in Calverstoke at this time of night."

James suggested another inn, and rather doubtfully, a lodging house, in a different part of the town.

The nightmare, as it seemed to Anthony, continued. The smaller inns, and the lodging house suggested by James, were all full, or all suspicious, he was not sure which, but naturally, most of the people did not know him. He only knew James by chance, because the *Thorell Arms* had a good garage, where they sometimes put up the Greystones car.

It seemed to him that they had been driving about for hours and hours, when all at once he saw that the big hotel of the town, the *Red Lion*, was still lighted up. There was a dance or some other function going on. The hotel people would know him. It would be expensive, but that could not be helped. After all, he took the two women to the hotel, ordered some sort of supper and a room for them, and took a room for himself, before midnight. It had been a long day. He felt that it was too late to get back to Greystones, and too late to telephone to ask if his father had arrived. It would be better to wait till the next morning, when Green would probably be able to talk. At least that was what he hoped. He trusted that the disappearance of the car meant only that it had been stolen, but there was evidently some mystery, which he could not fathom, and he slept badly.

The next morning he tried to ring up Greystones on the telephone, but for a long time he had no

answer but intermittent buzzing, and at last the exchange kindly informed him, "We can't get through—line out of order."

Anthony swore; then remembered to ring up Molly, and told her where he was. "I was too late to get to Greystones last night," he said, "but I am going on there directly. No, no news of R.P. yet. . . . Oh—Molly, the right number of the car is A.F. not A.T. 5091. You might let Margetson know that."

He did not want to tell her any more, though he had a suspicion that events were thickening about him. Something was going to happen. He could not make out where his father was. He must be staying somewhere in the town. Anthony had enquired tentatively at the *Red Lion*, but no one had seen Mr. Preston for a long time.

Anthony did not want to go to the police if he could avoid it. He went to the hospital first. Yes, he could see Green, the matron told him, but only for a few minutes, the young man was still very weak.

He found that Green was in one of the smaller wards, which happened to be otherwise empty at the moment. The young fellow was lying with his eyes shut, looking white and worn. The nurse who came with Anthony only said, "Mr. Preston has come to see you, Green," pointed to a bell-push in the wall, and went away.

"Hullo, Green, how do you feel this morning?" Anthony greeted him in as unconcerned a manner as he could. Green opened his eyes, and answered with an attempt at vivacity. "Good morning, sir,

I'm very sorry—" then he stopped with a look of utter bewilderment and disappointment, " Oh, I thought nurse said it was Mr. Preston ? "

" I am Anthony Preston. I understand that you have been driving a car for my father. I am sorry to hear that you have been so ill."

" Yes sir, thank you. How is Mr. Preston, sir ? "

" Well, that is rather what I want to hear from you. Did you leave him at Greystones ? I tried to ring him up there, but the line seems to be out of order."

" No sir, Mr. Preston meant to go there yesterday, but I was too ill to go. I don't know what he did."

Green tried to raise himself on his elbow, but fell back. " I feel as weak as a kitten," he said.

" What about this sleeping draught ? You seem to have overdone it a bit this time ? "

" The doctor's bin asking me. I've never taken a sleepin' draught in my life, not to my knowledge."

" Who can have doped you ? Have you any idea ? "

" I had supper with a fellow I'd met at Cambridge. I suppose he hocussed me and stole the car. Perhaps I did gas a bit about it. He was a chauffeur too. I thought he was straight enough. The doctor asked at the garage, but they were queer. They said I'd taken the car out myself in the morning. I can't have done that. I was as sick as a dog here all the morning."

" Well—" Anthony would have liked to ask a

great deal more, but the young man's sickly pallor seemed to intensify as he talked. Anthony thought he was going to faint and rang the nurse's bell. "Don't bother about it," he said, "I'll let you know later. It is not your fault. I am very sorry for all this."

"You're very kind, sir," but the nurse came in, and Anthony was glad to go, though he had not gained much information. Green had not even told him where his father was staying.

He went back to the *Red Lion*, and found a message from Molly, asking him to ring her up.

"Well, child, what is it?" he began as soon as he could.

"Mr. Margetson has gone out of town. I thought you'd like to know. I could not give him the right number of the car."

"That's a pity. But you might ring up Scotland Yard, ask for Superintendent Watts, and tell him I haven't found the car yet, but it was at Calverstoke, at the *Thorell Arms* the night before last."

"With Grandpapa?"

"Yes, but he must have gone home some other way. I tried to ring up this morning, and the dashed line was out of order. I shall go there myself now, as soon as I can."

"Can't I come too?"

"Yes, later. I'll let you know when I get there. I still want a liaison officer in town, you know."

Molly gurgled agreeably through the telephone, "Not much liaison, when I can't connect you with

the other end ! I don't know where Mr. Margetson is."

Anthony did not know either, but guessed—Greystones. Had Margetson, for some extraordinary reason, which would only occur to the distorted mind of a detective, disconnected the telephone ?

CHAPTER XI

ANTHONY was perfectly right in his judgment of his father's motive for "running away" from the Bishop's palace at Ely. Robert Preston really disliked intensely being anywhere but in his own house, though at times he derived some pleasure from fulfilling a duty when he stayed with any one of his three married children. They were disappointed because his sojourns with them were "like angels' visits, few and far between," and they were still young enough to misunderstand. They thought it was rather tiresome and selfish of him. They could not yet realise that the one safeguard of old age is serenity, a serenity that can seldom be maintained apart from accepted and familiar surroundings, in the pursuance of a comfortable routine. Jolts and jerks, and sudden excursions hither and thither, which cause pleasure and excitement, or even pain and fatigue, are the breath of life to the young, who look upon movement and variety as a right, and any sort of dullness and monotony as a wrong. It has yet to be seen whether the constant bustle and hurry of this generation will tend to prolong life, or rather to shorten it. Rest is perhaps as essential to our nervous and highly-strung generation as it was to the savage, who followed Nature's way, and slept

when he could in the daytime, as well as at night. It is true that he had naturally the variety and spice of danger in hunting for his food, that we all seem to seek artificially in constant movement.

In the back of his mind Robert had always looked upon his flight from Greystones as one of "Anthony's wild-cat schemes." It was practically impossible to a man of his age and standing to realise the position into which Margetson's suspicions had forced him. Away from Anthony's arguments and Margetson's unaccustomed presence, which he felt was inimical and resented accordingly, he began to forget any unpleasant consequences that might accrue to himself if he went home, at least he only remembered them at rapidly-increasing intervals. It can hardly be said that he blamed Eleanor for having been murdered in his house, but it is true that he thought more than once that if Eleanor had only married in a suitable and commonplace fashion, or had been content to lead the life conventionally assigned to the unmarried women of Robert's own generation—good works and a nebulous place in the background—nothing of the kind would have happened. There were other moments when he felt that he would give anything to have her murderer brought to justice; moments of tenderness and kindness when he was haunted by the thought that he had been unable to protect her from so untoward a fate. The remembrance of her intense terror at the moment of her death he put out of his mind. It is part of the armour of self-preservation, the strongest instinct in the human

race, to put away at once and for ever thoughts that tend to be unbearable.

When the Bishop had left his cousin by himself at Ely, he had asked no questions about the reasons that seemed to make it desirable for Robert to stay away from home, but he guessed, without much trouble, that Eleanor's murder and the police proceedings afterwards might tend to make Greystones uninhabitable at all events for a time. The Bishop, therefore, asked no questions, welcomed his cousin, and went away for his sea voyage, begging Robert to remain in the palace as long as he liked. There was a moment when the older man thought of undertaking the sea voyage in the Bishop's company, but his courage failed. He had never been a good sailor, he dreaded illness, and he said good-bye to the Bishop without qualms, though he knew quite well that a younger man would have hailed the opportunity as a good line of retreat. But in his own mind the bare idea of retreat was preposterous. He was sure that he had never run away from anything in his life. He was innocent of the charge so ridiculously brought against him—and—well—he would not leave England.

So he remained in the pleasant precincts, the grey, old cloisters, the budding rose-garden of the Bishop's palace, very comfortable under Gough's able ministrations, with every reasonable luxury at his command—and the Underwoods. But even princesses have to put up with crumpled rose-leaves.

A week of the Underwoods was enough. Mr.

Underwood put it very mildly when he said that Mr Preston was inclined to be irritable and fidgety, and poor little Mrs. Underwood became even more dithering than usual, and wilted visibly under the muttered ejaculations that sometimes escaped from her guest, though, to do him justice, he generally made them under his breath.

Finally he gave vent to two words in Latin, which the chaplain unfortunately overheard and understood, "*Dixit insipiens*," after some particularly inept and sententious remark made by Mrs. Underwood, and from that moment relations became more than a little strained. Strained relations with the Underwoods meant an amount of what Molly would have called "gobble gobble," that proved to be the last straw. They went off to their son's school at mid-term, and the day that they were expected to return, Robert took to his heels, or rather to the car that he hired at the Fitzwilliam garage. After all his brave thoughts, he could not deny that this time he was running away.

The only thing he said to Gough, when he asked for his clothes to be packed, was, "Never forget that your master, the Bishop, is a saint. I am afraid that I am only a miserable sinner."

Gough said, "Yes, sir, there aren't many like his lordship."

With that meagre allowance of reproof or sympathy, whichever it was, Robert had to be content. Although he had taken the car for a week, he had intended, more or less, to go straight home, but first he had a long consultation with the chauffeur,

George Green, who seemed to be a civil, amiable, young fellow, and Robert laid great stress on the sort of driving that he liked, very steady, no excess of speed, nothing sudden, a quiet even pace, and above all things, smoothness, he hated to be shaken or bumped. Green said that he understood, and made some sensible suggestions about cushions, showing Robert that a certain amount of packing prevented concussion.

"I used to drive a gentleman who had sciatica," he said, "he'd cry like a baby, he would, if you bumped him, so we had to learn how to keep him steady in the car."

"You're evidently the right man for me," said Robert, "though I warn you that if I am bumped, I don't cry, I swear, and you'll know it."

"You shan't be bumped, sir, the car has good tyres, anyway, not if I can help it, I promise, but I can't get you to Calverstoke in one day, not at the speed you like."

Robert had insisted that he could not stand going at more than twenty miles an hour.

"Let me see the map," he studied it, first through his spectacles and then with a magnifying glass. "We'll go first to Cambridge, and put up at the *University Arms*."

"Very good, sir," Green touched his cap, and Robert approved of his manners. They drove away "like a funeral," as Green said afterwards to a pal of his own.

Near the station, Robert, to the chauffeur's surprise, stopped him. "Do you see that man

over there, with a beard, carrying a coat over his arm ?"

"Yes, sir."

"Just go down the street and see where he goes, and then come back to me."

Green touched his cap again; he began to wonder if the old gentleman were "a bit balmy."

"You needn't speak to him," said Robert. "I only want to know if he is going to the palace, if so, I may have to go back there to see him."

Of course Robert thought that the bearded stranger was Margetson, and had not the faintest intention of going to see him, but he wanted to make sure. "Hast thou found me, oh mine enemy ?" he said to himself, almost childishly pleased to think he had got away before the detective arrived.

Green came back to say that the stranger had gone into the Bank. The ubiquitous Barclay had a branch in the High Street, and a good many people from the country round about banked there.

"All right," said Robert, settling himself among his cushions. "You can go on, and er—what is your name—Green ? Green, you can drive a little faster, but nothing extreme you know, nothing extreme."

Green was thankful for the order; what is the good of driving a Daimler saloon if you mayn't get out of a walk—a crawl—as the young chauffeur indignantly called it ? At the same time he was rather astonished, especially as later in the day Robert twice told him to put on speed. "You'd

almost have thought he was running away from that gent with the burberry over his arm," he said to himself, "and I believe it was only Mr. Cordwain from Northover Street. Anyhow, I don't mind as long as we can shove along a bit."

The sight of the detective—as he believed—hot on his trail, rather shook Robert. So they were still looking for him? Oliver had said something of the kind in his last letter, the usual sort of advice that they all gave to him. "Better sit tight and keep out of the way, until Margetson finds out his mistake, or the real culprit is discovered."

"Sit tight? I'd like to see Oliver, or Anthony either for that matter, sitting tight with the Underwoods. Two more abject nincompoops it has never been my ill-fortune to meet, but if that confounded policeman is still hunting for me, how is the real culprit to be discovered? I don't keep him in my pocket."

So thought Robert, not without reason. All the same, he was very glad that he had told Gough that he was going home—he had not told anyone as it happened, but he thought that he had—it would put Margetson off the scent. He would not go home just yet. He thought of such business as he had to do at home, his bit of shooting, his cows and his cowman, his garden and his gardeners, his books, the Bench at Calverstoke, some meetings he ought to attend—they could all wait.

In the brilliant days of his own youth, Robert had been at Oxford, but he had a few old friends at Cambridge; the Master of one college, who was

almost a contemporary of his own; two Fellows of another college, who had been at Eton with Anthony; the grandsons of another contemporary who were undergraduates at a third college. Robert felt himself always in touch with that strange mixture of distinguished learning and youthful frivolity which is the charm of every university, except perhaps in America where we are told that everyone is serious all the time. Shakespeare has said that "Crabbed age and youth cannot live together," but he would not have said so at Oxford or Cambridge, where they meet and mingle happily, though youth is often far more crabbed than age. No one remembers his 'varsity only as a shifting succession of half-baked undergraduates like himself, he likes to remember a more stable background, Chancellors and Vice-Chancellors, Deans and Masters, Provosts and Presidents, Fellows and Dons, Tutors and Proctors. If the authorities were at times remarkably odd, not to say laughable, to undergraduate eyes, so much the better. The general effect of learning and ignorance, dignity and impudence, holding hands in a captivating if often provoking fashion, repeated from one generation to another, can never be forgotten.

All that happy tradition belonged to Robert Preston, was part of him, he was at his ease in that atmosphere, so he decided to stay on at Cambridge, looked up his friends of three generations, and enjoyed their company.

With a touch of bravado, slightly reminiscent of a freshman enjoying unexpected liberty from the

trammels of school, he decided that no one should know where he was, not even his own sons and daughters. If it were necessary for him to hide, he would hide completely. He told Green that he would probably go on to London shortly, but meanwhile, he remained at Cambridge, living by himself at the hotel, after refusing an invitation from his old friend, the Master, and resisting a lurking temptation to send for Molly to come and enjoy his recreations with him. Somehow or other he felt that so long as *no one* knew where he was, he was safe. It did not occur to him that anyone would be alarmed or apprehensive about him. Some characteristic enjoyment of bachelor freedom sustained him. He even drank the Master's port, and did not refuse lobster *à l'Americaine* at an undergraduate's luncheon party.

These juvenile liberties were all very well, but a moment came when age and failing strength claimed their revenge.

Robert had a bad night—two bad nights—he felt shaky, and he did not know any of the doctors at Cambridge. His temper became badly ruffled, which was a sign, that his own family would have recognised, that he was not very ill, but Green was alarmed. He went to the Master and implored him to persuade Mr. Preston to see a doctor. It was part of the fastidious—almost feminine—side of Robert that he could not bear to "expose his weakness" as he called it, to strangers, and he refused to call in any doctor (qualified by several undeserved adjectives) at all, but as his friends and

Green all seemed to make a point of it, he stayed in bed for a couple of days, which was about all that any doctor would have prescribed for him.

He had a supply of books, various people came to see him, his room was comfortable, the hotel servants were very attentive, he was quite content. No one imagined that he was not corresponding with his family, and so the time went on, while the police hunted for the wrong car, and Robert himself had practically forgotten that no one knew where he was. The Master cashed a cheque for him, and put the cheque itself into a drawer and forgot it, so his bank received no news of him. John Fleming, one of Anthony's friends, rather wondered why none of his family seemed to think it necessary to look up the old man. Fleming had stayed at Greystones, and knew that Robert as a rule was not so completely autonomous, but something of a more personally interesting nature occurred in Fleming's own life, and he did not remember to ask Robert what his family were doing.

After a couple of days Robert rose from his bed, said that he was better and was taken for a drive by Fleming in the afternoon, but they went too fast for his taste. He did not appreciate Fleming's really skilful driving, and in the evening he felt less well, and even rather perturbed about himself.

Without taking into consideration any risk of being arrested by Margetson—in fact, he forgot all about it—Robert decided to do what seemed to him the obvious thing. He was ill, he ought to see a doctor. He refused to consult any stranger, there-

fore the only alternative was to go and see his own doctor, who understood his health, and had attended him for years. He felt a sudden craving for Calgarrie's familiar cheerful countenance and sympathetic, if sometimes abrupt manner. The fact was perhaps that Robert understood his doctor. There was nothing about his health that any ordinarily qualified general practitioner could not have tackled quite satisfactorily, but Robert was determined—his children would have said obstinate —when he had made up his mind.

He decided that he would start the next day, go straight to Calverstoke and see Calgarrie. He did not think particularly about going back to Greystones. It was a commonplace corollary after visiting Calgarrie.

Of course it was one of the strange contingencies of the case, that Green's letter to his fiancée had entirely diverted attention from Cambridge. Margetson and Anthony both took it for granted that the car for which they were searching had gone to London. Green had not written again, because he did not write easily, but he always told Clare Entwhistle when he changed his address, and he hoped every day that they would leave Cambridge. He did not care for the short afternoon expeditions that sufficed for Robert, and he had put forward tentative suggestions that they should go for a night or two, here and there, but Robert had dug himself in, and paid no attention. Then he took to his bed, and Green was in despair. Lounging about was no pleasure to the chauffeur, and it seemed to

him that everyone in Cambridge drove their own car; there was not much congenial company for him. He liked talking motor gossip and occasionally playing cards with men of his own calling. Of course there were some garages where cars were let out on hire, but there Green had a sort of professional jealousy, he liked to be thought in private service. Unless Clare Entwhistle was with him, the " movies " bored him. He was no reader, did not care for watching cricket or tennis, of which he could have had his fill, and naturally, the beauties of fine architecture, the interest of history and tradition, appealed to him not at all. He thought only that the streets of Cambridge were as ill-adapted for motoring as those of most old towns, and he would not have been sorry to turn his back on the twists and turns and awkward corners, generally crowded, and much too full of bicycles for his liking. You had to be always changing gear or jamming on your brakes. There was no credit to be had for driving in a place like that. He liked new, open roads, smooth with tarmac, and a good curb on each side to keep the foot passengers out of your way. In Cambridge you never knew where you were, no one even attempted to keep on the pavement, if there were a pavement.

He supposed that Clare would enjoy such sights as the boats and punts on the river, the cute little bridges, the great smooth lawns, the trees and flowers abloom everywhere. It was all very pretty no doubt, and the young gentlemen in their funny little black gowns, or in flannels and blazers and

brilliant pullovers and scarves, made things hum a bit, but give him the road, or some decent machines to look at. George Green was a specialist, of the same order as Paul Hardy, or as Margetson himself; he had not much room to spare for outside interests.

However, there was at last considerable excitement when the Prince of Wales arrived on his way from somewhere else to somewhere else, after the manner of modern princes, to whom the stately progresses of their ancestors are unthinkable. He slept at Trinity for one night, to the joy and bewilderment of the townspeople, who turned out in their thousands to see him. A good many other people, with cars not always driven by themselves, were attracted to Cambridge, and Green found some kindred spirits, and had some "real sprinters" to look at. He was not in the least interested in Royalty, and turned up his nose at the Prince's car, because it was not the most powerful on the market.

It will be understood that he was not sorry to receive his marching orders. In fact he had told several of the chauffeurs he had met that he was "fed to the teeth" with Cambridge.

"You must not go fast this time," Mr. Preston told him, "I am not feeling quite up to the mark, and I can't start early. I must have my breakfast comfortably."

"I am sorry, sir, do you wish to go to London?"

"London? Certainly not. Calverstoke in Dorsetshire. What earthly reason is there for me to go to London?"

Green had grown accustomed to his master's manner, and had also grown rather fond of the old gentleman, whom he no longer regarded as a harmless lunatic, but as certainly to be humoured. He laughed, "I don't know, sir, you mentioned London before."

"Probably you want to go to London yourself? I can't oblige you this time. Look up Calverstoke on one of those invaluable maps of yours, will you, and tell me how long it will take to get there—at my pace, mind, at my pace. I am not going to be bumped to bits for anyone."

Green consulted his maps and shook his head. "You can't do it in a day, sir, you'd arrive about midnight, even if you drove at twenty-five instead of twenty miles an hour, even if you started very early."

"I told you that I would not start early, and I can't call on my doctor at midnight."

"You are going to see your doctor, sir? Then you'd want to get there—what is his consulting hour, sir?"

"He is generally at home between two and three."

Green looked at the map again, frowned and bit his finger. "If you'd start from here after lunch, sir, dine and sleep the night at Edenhurst, there's a good hotel there, I'd get you into Calverstoke in time to lunch before you go to the doctor."

"Edenhurst? Where is that?" Green showed him on the map. It was a small country town.

"You are sure there is a decent hotel? Good beds and no chance of being poisoned, or anything of that sort?"

"No, sir. I've stayed there with customers, driving west, fairly often. They've always been satisfied. It's an old town, what they call pictureskew."

Robert smiled at the "pictureskew," he knew that any taste of that kind was entirely alien from Green. He would have much preferred Birmingham and motor-works.

"Well, if it can't be helped, I daresay that would be the best plan. I can lunch early. We will start at 2.30 to-morrow."

They started, as arranged, the day before Margetson told his strange story to Anthony on the common at Ashstead.

After spending a night at the comfortable little hotel at Edenhurst, which he found to be an old-fashioned fishing centre, and at the moment taken up by several men who had arrived with the may-fly, Robert felt better, but still thought that the visit to Calgarrie was necessary. They drove off the next morning, and meant to go straight to the doctor's house a little way out of Calverstoke. Robert intended to ask Mrs. Calgarrie for some lunch.

So far, so good; they started later than Green had planned, because Robert felt better, and thought he would like to have a look at the trout stream and the "pictureskew" town before he left it. Then a tyre punctured, of course, and they were delayed, and then to their horror discovered that it was market-day, and that every kind of beast and vehicle seemed to be coming out of Calverstoke

and meeting them on the road. They had to go at a foot's pace and several times had to stop altogether and wait for cattle to be driven past the car. Robert fumed and fidgeted, but nothing could be done. It was past four o'clock when they arrived, to find Dr. Calgarrie out, but expected back shortly.

Robert had tea with Mrs. Calgarrie who was an old and tried friend, not at all of the Underwood type. She concealed her surprise at his arrival, though inwardly consumed with curiosity. It was dinner time before the doctor arrived, to find, with astonishment, which he did not make the smallest attempt to hide, his old patient, waiting for him, as if it were the most natural thing in the world for him to be there, controlling his impatience very badly because Calgarrie was late.

CHAPTER XII

Dr. Calgarrie, who had heard the bare facts from Anthony, though nothing about the official paper that had been discovered, explained the new development of affairs at Greystones to Robert, who was to a certain extent gratified, but at the same time offended and disgruntled by this second outrage, as he called it. The Calgarries persuaded him, not without difficulty, to stay the night with them, and ring up Mrs. Crutcher to say that he would arrive the next morning.

"You must have your bed aired," said Calgarrie, "very dangerous if you don't, especially after the rain we have had lately. Besides, the servants are as nervous as cats on hot bricks. If you arrive at night, suddenly, probably they won't let you in, or something idiotic of that description, which would be very bad for you. Moreover, you know yourself, you don't like motoring in the dark. You must dine with us now, and it will be dark before you get home."

The last argument probably had the greatest effect. Robert was inclined to think that Dawson's successor would have kept his bed aired, and he pooh-poohed the existence of nerves in his servants.

"Tempers, no doubt, but nerves—my dear fellow—they are country people with excellent digestions! They eat like wolves and sleep like dormice; such people have no nerves."

"They have cowardly dispositions then," laughed Dr. Calgarrie, "and the police keep them on the jump. Mrs. Crutcher can't get over the fact of being called up before dawn because there were robbers, as she calls them, in the house. She told me that she understood the Litany much better now, when she prayed to be delivered from battle, murder and sudden death."

"Tut—tut," said Robert, impatiently, the fact being that he did not like to be reminded of such things. "I don't suppose that we could get back before dark, though the days are long—"

At last, after numerous apologies to Mrs. Calgarrie for this sudden tax on her hospitality, he consented to stay, asked that Dr. Calgarrie's secretary might telephone to warn his own household of his arrival, and ordered Green to come for him at eleven o'clock the next morning.

Dr. Calgarrie advised Green to garage the car and take a room for himself at the *Thorell Arms*.

Punctually at eleven o'clock the next morning the car arrived, and Robert with his luggage was packed into it, in the usual friendly country fashion, with the Calgarries themselves and a considerable proportion of their household in the porch to see him off.

Robert had had a good night, he was glad to have his "indisposition" treated as a small and

passing matter, he felt refreshed, and beyond all things very happy to be on his way home.

They had driven a fair distance before he happened even to glance at the back of his chauffeur's familiar linen coat in front of him, and then for some reason that he could not explain, it occurred to him that it was less familiar than usual. Had Green got a new coat, and was he sitting on a cushion, he seemed to be taller than he had been before ?

Robert was in a comfortable and idle frame of mind. The idea came and went, but as he drove on he remembered that he had not spoken to Green that morning. Green had not left his seat before they started, but that was not remarkable, because Dr. Calgarrie's man had put in the luggage and had arranged the rug and cushions for Robert. So many people had been crowding round the door that Green was hardly called upon to take any part in the proceedings. He was not like Wilkins, who would have known them all. Green was driving a little faster than Robert liked. The car bumped over some obstruction in the road, Robert swore, and thought that his cushions were less comfortably arranged than usual. He put out his hand for the speaking tube, but before he spoke, it dawned upon him that the man who was driving him *was not Green*.

Robert's first instinct was to shout to his unknown driver to stop, but another instinct, it could hardly be called reasoning, prevailed. He sat still, and replaced the tube. Without being exactly frightened, he was puzzled. Why had Green sent another man to drive him without a word of ex-

planation ? Had the fellow been making a night of it, and was not in a condition to drive ? Had he had an accident ? In any case he must have sent this man, who had brought the car to Calgarrie's punctually and had driven off on the right road without any orders. Robert was surprised. Green had excellent manners, like a gentleman's servant, not like one of those damned mannerless, ill-bred chauffeur fellows that you sometimes picked up at a garage—so he thought. It was surprising that Green had sent no message of apology.

Then the sight of a ladder against a house on the road reminded Robert of the late occurrence at his own house, as described by the doctor. There was a great deal yet to be explained. What possession of Eleanor's could these crooks—he supposed they were crooks—want ? It annoyed him very much that apparently on two occasions people had managed to break into his house and get away without being caught. Such a thing ought not to be possible. Apparently Anthony had been rather cryptic with Calgarrie, but he had stated clearly that nothing had been stolen. Evidently, Calgarrie had said, the thieves had not found what they wanted.

Robert knew that he was nearly at home again, as the road led across a great heath that had once been very bare, as he remembered, but was now rapidly turning into a forest of self-sown fir-trees. He looked steadily at the chauffeur's immovable back in front of him; the close-cropped hair at the man's neck was darker than Green's, yes, it was certainly darker, though very little of it could be seen between

the wide, white collar of his coat and his cap, also with its white cover.

Why was Robert being driven back to his house by this unknown man, who evidently did not want his employer to notice that he was not Green? When they bumped on the road or turned a corner sharply, at the next possible quiet moment, Green, driving slowly, had got into a habit of giving a quick look round to see if things were all right inside the car, but this man was like an automaton, a robot, he might have been part of the machinery.

Then a touch of Robert's natural shrewdness came to his rescue. This fellow wanted to get into the house. He was one of the gang that was looking for *something* that had been in Eleanor's possession. It says much for the clearness of Robert's conscience that he never once thought of the Colquhoun papers. He considered. Calgarrie had mentioned police in charge of the house. The fellow was possibly trying only to steal the car, but if that were the case, he might be half-way to London by this time, instead of driving steadily to Greystones.

The best thing to be done was to continue to treat him as Green, get him into the house, and tell those confounded useless policemen to take him into custody. They should justify their existence somehow.

No doubt he was prepared with a yarn to spin if Robert recognised that he was not Green, a yarn that must be accepted at its face value, if he had to be recognised, but Robert hoped to avoid the

necessity, because it would put him on his guard. No one else in the house would be aware that he was not Green.

Robert's suspicions were further confirmed because the driver turned in at the open gate of Greystones without waiting for any direction. So the fellow knew the house! Green would not have known it. His representative had not got up his brief very well, Robert thought, being unaware of Green's weakness for posing as a chauffeur in private employment, who would never own that he had not seen his "boss's" house.

The drive turned a little sharply up to the house and every chauffeur naturally sounded his horn at that point. It was enough. Wilkins, Crutcher, Mrs. Crutcher, West the parlourmaid, appeared as if by magic in the porch. There was no question of any attention being paid to Green, true or false. Robert had a slightly shy and self-conscious sensation of being welcomed like the prodigal son, but it was a pleasant enough sensation. Later he would laugh about it. He got inside the door at last, shaking Mrs. Crutcher's hand, and declaring somewhat testily that he was quite well, testily, because there were signs of Mrs. Crutcher's "turning on the waterworks," and that, though touching as a sign of her devotion, was embarrassing. Then he said, without actually looking at the chauffeur, who was now standing irresolutely, with his back to the porch, and was certainly taller than Green. "Oh, Green, come in, I shall have something for you. You have driven me very well indeed. I shall write to Fitz-

william—but come in, and Mrs. Crutcher will give you some dinner. Just wait in the hall a minute, will you ? Wilkins, come in to the study with me, I want to change my boots."

He and Wilkins went through the swing door under the stairs, to the study. The other servants disappeared, and the pseudo-Green came into the house and was left standing alone in the hall.

It would have surprised everyone concerned if they had seen him make a rapid dash for the telephone; apparently he barely touched it, but he came back to his position of attention by the table with a satisfied expression on his clean-shaven face, certainly a darker, less pleasant face than Green's had been. Meanwhile, in the study Robert was giving orders to Wilkins.

"That fellow in the hall is not Green. I don't know what he wants here. We have some constables about the place I understand ?"

"Two plain-clothes men, sir, yes." Wilkins was admirable. He showed no surprise, and asked no questions.

"Let Mrs. Crutcher give the fellow some dinner, don't rouse his suspicions, but keep an eye on him, and tell them to arrest him on a charge of attempting to steal the car."

"Yes, sir," said Wilkins.

Robert pulled some treasury notes out of his pocket. "Give these notes to him now, and say I'm not very well, but I want to see him before he goes."

"Yes, sir."

"Let me know when he has been arrested."

"Yes, sir."

Wilkins vanished, and found the so-called Green standing by the window in the hall, looking at his car as it stood outside. Wilkins gave his master's tip and his message pleasantly enough.

"We're just going to have dinner," he said. "Will you come along? Mr. Preston don't seem very grand. I shall have to go back to him."

"He hasn't been very well," said the would-be Green. "This is a fine house. Mr. Preston's told me quite a lot about it."

He had tumbled very quickly to the fact that he was only a temporary hireling in spite of the real Green's attempts to "show off." "Can I put the car under cover somewhere," he asked, "or can it stand where it is till I go?"

"Oh, it is all right there," said Wilkins, carelessly. "Come along, or dinner will be cold."

He took the man into the servants' hall, made him over to Mrs. Crutcher's hospitality, had a look at the car, and disconnected something in it, with an air of satisfaction equal to that of the other man when he had tampered with the telephone.

He knew where to find the constable on duty, who was actually watching the front gate.

"Let the poor chap have his dinner," said that worthy, who was much too kind-hearted for his job. "Don't frighten the maids. I'll catch him as he comes out. You'd better be near, Wilkins, I've

got some darbies, but he may try to make a run for it."

"I've put his car out of action for a bit anyhow," said Wilkins grimly. But he did not try to make a run at all. At dinner he talked to the maids about the house and the late attempt at burglary.

"You might show me the room," he suggested to West, the parlourmaid. "It's interesting you know, to say you've seen the place."

"D'you mean the room where Miss Eleanor was murdered?" asked Elsie, who still took a gruesome delight in the fact. Mrs. Crutcher broke in. "You get on with your dinner, Elsie, and don't speak till you're spoken to."

"A murder!" cried the supposed Green. "Now, I'd heard nothing of that. Mr. Preston only said there'd been a burglary lately, but the burglars were disturbed and took nothing. Was the lady murdered a hundred years ago, and does her ghost walk? This looks like a house where a ghost might walk."

Mrs. Crutcher looked at him severely, Elsie and Kate were already regarding him with their mouths open. A ghost—they hadn't thought of that. Might they see Miss Eleanor's ghost? Mrs. Crutcher knew what that meant. Screams and shrieks when they put up the shutters, hysterics when they went to bed. She wasn't going to have "none of that nonsense."

"No," she said. "A very sad story, not very long ago, we don't talk about it, Mr. Green, if that's your name. I daresay Wilkins'll show you the

window where the robber got in, if so be you want to see it. It's morbid, all that going after scenes of burglary and such-like, I think. I wouldn't have anything to do with them if I was you."

"I'd rather like to see the room though," persisted Green. "Mine's a dull life, driving, generally old ladies and gentlemen who don't like to go at any speed. You don't know how tired one gets of being ordered to go steady and slow, as if one was driving a hearse. Burglaries seem to me a sort of excitement. I always read about 'em in the papers, sort of romantic—yes?" He was making eyes at West, a personable woman, as he mentioned the word "romantic." Presumably this Mr. Green had a way with him, and generally got what he wanted through a woman. Evidently he wanted to see that room.

Wilkins came in, as they were all getting up, after one of the best dinners that Mrs. Crutcher knew how to cook. She had made it extra good that day as a sort of feast in honour of Mr. Preston's return. Any excuse for a feast is good enough for a cook who takes a pride in her work.

"Will you come now, Green," said Wilkins. "Mr. Preston wants to see you before you go,and he's rather tired, he means to take a nap this afternoon."

The door of the servants' hall opened into a fairly wide lobby with a stone floor, lighted only by the window of the back stairs; it was not very light. As Green went out, he turned a languishing glance on West, which said plainly enough, "I should like

to see you again," but he only remarked to Mrs. Crutcher, "I'll come back presently," evidently meaning to be polite.

Wilkins shut the door rather sharply behind him, and almost at the same moment Green found himself seized by the arm on each side, Wilkins on his right, a strange man on his left. "Come quietly now," said the man on his left. "I charge you with stealing that car you've been driving to-day."

So after all Mr. Preston had recognised that he was not Green!

He struggled for a moment, then stood still. "That's all nonsense," he said. "I can explain that directly."

"You'll have lots of time to explain," said the policeman, who was holding his left arm.

There were several doors in the lobby. Green looked round and then attempted a break-away. He was very strong and as lithe as a cat, but the odds were against him. The doors were all locked except the swing door under the stairs, and out of that loomed the stocky figure of Crutcher. Wilkins wasn't going "to take no risks," though the policeman had been inclined to laugh at his caution. It was not long before the so-called Green, still struggling, found himself hand-cuffed securely.

"Now, you're a stupid fellow," said the policeman, almost sympathetically. "If you'd come along quietly, we shouldn't have had to do this."

The prisoner cursed volubly. "If you'd only listen," he said. "I didn't steal the bloody car. I drove it to oblige a friend. My name's not Green.

Green's in an hotel at Calverstoke. I'd have told the old gentleman if he'd asked me, but you don't suppose I'm going to let myself be nabbed for nothing?"

"No," said the policeman. They had got the prisoner on to the floor, and Crutcher had muffled his legs in a sack. Now they hauled him up and put him on a chair; it was easier to hold him like that.

"Ring up Calverstoke, will you," said the policeman to Wilkins, "and ask for a conveyance? I'd better take this chap to the police station at once."

"I'll drive you in—save time—" said Wilkins. "You and Crutcher can come to make sure. Mr. Preston won't object. Pratt can run up here this afternoon."

The prisoner cursed again.

At that moment someone banged at the door of the servants' hall, which Wilkins had locked, as he had locked them all, except the swing doors guarded by Crutcher. Wilkins shouted to the imprisoned household. "All right, just coming."

"We'll get this fellow away first," he said.

"You are treating me damned badly," said the infuriated prisoner. "I can explain everything. Green was ill, and asked me——"

Mrs. Crutcher's voice was at last heard above the turmoil. "Wilkins! Wilkins! The front door bell is ringing and ringing."

Wilkins looked round wildly, he did not like to lose sight of his captive.

"You go," said the policeman, "he'll be all right."

Wilkins went out and opened the door; there—to his great astonishment—stood Margetson.

CHAPTER XIII

MARGETSON had heard, through Scotland Yard, that another attempt was to be made to secure the secret paper that was lying safely locked up in the Chief Commissioner's safe.

It had transpired that the people who wanted it did not know where it was. They believed, apparently, that it was still at Greystones. The information available did not go so far as to say in what manner the attempt was to be made. Margetson had been to Calverstoke, and had brought over two more plain-clothes men as a reinforcement. It can be imagined that his surprise was great when he was taken immediately into the kitchen lobby and brought face to face with a man in chauffeur's livery, already handcuffed, with his feet tied together in a sack, guarded by three men, as if he had been very turbulent and violent.

"What was the fellow doing?" he asked, in great excitement. Was it possible that they had already caught the Arcos agent who was out to find that paper?

Wilkins and the policeman together gave him a jumbled version of what had happened. Margetson was distinctly disappointed.

"You'd better get him over to the police station

at once. We can easily find out if his story about Green can be authenticated. Where do you say Green is?" he asked the prisoner, but the man only turned his head away and did not answer. He looked extremely sulky.

"You can take him back in the police car that brought me here," said Margetson. "You needn't go, Wilkins. Did you say that Mr. Preston had returned? I should like to see him."

As the pseudo-Green, though still hand-cuffed, was allowed to walk to the car between the policeman and Wilkins, he came into a better light, and though he was holding his head down, Margetson could see his face, and suddenly had the impression that he had seen the man before.

He shrugged his shoulders, as the police car drove away, unable to connect the impression with anything else. "An ordinary crook," he thought; "professional car-stealer, I shouldn't be surprised."

The maids were coming out of the servants' hall, which Crutcher had unlocked, and Mrs. Crutcher stopped in amazement as she saw Margetson. "Did you know Mr. Preston was here, sir," she asked in very natural bewilderment. She had been told by Wilkins that "that there Margetson had come to his senses, and Mr. Preston could come home when he liked," but she felt less confident when the detective arrived thus rapidly on the heels of her master.

Margetson laughed. "I know now," he said, "but you need not be apprehensive. I acknowledge

freely that I was mistaken about Mr. Preston. It is someone else that I am after now."

"That chauffeur fellow, sir?"

"No, no, he's only a common crook, a car-stealer."

"Well, sir," broke in West, the parlourmaid, who resented the idea that a common crook had been making eyes at her all through dinner, "he was very anxious to see Miss Eleanor's room."

Margetson turned upon her, almost with a shout, "To see Miss Eleanor's room? What did he want there?"

"I don't know, sir. Just to see it, out of curiosity like, he said," Mrs. Crutcher answered, because West looked a little frightened. "I told him it was a morbid taste, but he didn't know about Miss Eleanor—only about the burglars breaking in." West was an honest woman if a trifle vain; she turned pink, "I think it may have just been an excuse, sir, to get a gossip—with me, sir." At that moment a bell rang, and West hurried away to answer it; she re-appeared almost immediately. "Will you come into the study, sir," she said to Margetson, "Mr. Preston would like to see you."

Margetson followed her into the hall. "I think I'll just telephone to the police-station first," he said. It did not take him very long to discover that he could not get through. That was puzzling, but might have been only an annoying coincidence, nevertheless he began to feel that the "chauffeur fellow" might be of more importance than he had

imagined. He remembered that there was something he had recognised in the man's appearance, and suddenly it occurred to him that the pseudo-Green had not spoken at all in his hearing.

Robert Preston—after the manner of the Prestons, who were always surprising Margetson—greeted him like an old friend and with an air of considerable triumph, "I think I've caught the criminal for you," he said. "That fellow took Green's place—I don't know how he disposed of Green—because he wanted to get in here."

Margetson stared at him. "The fellow was only trying to steal the car," he said. "I've seen him before somewhere, probably under the same sort of charge."

"Sit down, won't you?" Robert was very genial. "It is rather a long story, but if that chap wanted only to steal the car he could have been well out of our reach by this time. No, he wanted a chance to get into this house. I don't know why."

"Your telephone is out of order," said Margetson abruptly, "I must go to the post-office. I'd like to get through to Smithers at Calverstoke."

"Out of order! I always said that the damned thing was no use," said Robert irritably. "Oh! that fellow waited in the hall while I spoke to Wilkins. I suppose it is fairly easy to disconnect?"

"Yes, if you know how to do it," Margetson was thoroughly roused, he could hardly keep still. "Tell me about him quickly, will you; they'll take half an hour to get to Calverstoke. I'd like to ring up before they arrive."

"The fellow brought the car for me this morning to Calgarrie's house. I had been staying there for the night. I did not recognise that he was not Green, the chauffeur I'd taken with the car, until we were half-way here. I was just going to stop him and ask what the devil he meant by it, when it occurred to me that he wanted to get into this house. There could be no other reason. If he had wanted only to steal the car, he could have been in London by the time we started, or half-way to Southampton if he meant to get out of this country. Now, I don't know much about the last attempt here, but my son told Calgarrie that the thieves must have been looking for something that belonged to my niece, and that they had taken nothing. I conclude—whatever it was—that they could not find it. Therefore I supposed that this fellow was one of the gang; he meant to get into the house and try once more to find it. I can tell you definitely that he knew the way here, and knew the house. We are not quite in the village, and I should have had to direct Green. That is my story. I don't say that the fellow murdered my niece, but I have no doubt that he wanted to get into the house, and didn't need to be shown the way here. He had been here before. It looks as if he had discovered where the telephone is, too!"

"I must speak to Smithers at once. They ought to search the prisoner thoroughly, the moment he arrives. . . ." Margetson was out of the room and half-way up the drive before Robert could get out another word.

He shook his head. "Margetson is very smart all at once, but he did not catch the fellow—I did!" His face broke into smiles; for the first time since Eleanor's death, he felt that he was once more master in his own house; he had vindicated his character.

"Anthony's wild-cat schemes indeed," he said to himself contemptuously, "these affairs want nothing but common sense to get to the bottom of them."

. . . . . .

Margetson telephoned from the post-office to Smithers at Calverstoke, and directed that the chauffeur charged with stealing a car at Greystones should be searched and put under special supervision the moment that he arrived at the police station. It was necessary to give the inspector some inkling of the possible underlying seriousness of the affair, and to ask that the story about Green should be investigated at once. Smithers was inclined to be sceptical. He thought the link very thin. "I expect you'll find that there's nothing in it. What's the difference between one hired chauffeur and another? It isn't as if Green were Mr. Preston's own servant."

"Have him searched anyhow," said Margetson, "and if he has any sort of fire-arms on him, lock him up till I come. I've seen the fellow before, but can't remember when or where."

Smithers promised to go to the *Thorell Arms* and find out about Green, but afterwards he decided

to wait until he had seen the man under arrest. Smithers, like Anthony Preston, thought that Margetson "had the wind up" over this case. For the life of him the inspector could not see any possible connection between Miss Wentworth's murderer and the hired chauffeur very understandably picked up by Mr. Preston at Calverstoke.

Smithers had been considerably impressed by the discovery in the murdered lady's bedroom of the official document about which the newspapers had made so much noise, and he supposed that the agents of Arcos might still be trying to find it, but a chauffeur from the *Thorell Arms* seemed to be altogether too familiar to be connected in any sense with the sinister agents of a foreign country. Smithers thought that he would probably recognise the man as one of the usual employés at the garage, and that it would be foolish to exaggerate the importance of very hazy suspicions. If he were a local man it would account for his knowledge of the way to the house.

In fact, it was very much in Mr. Smithers' mind, if the prisoner told a plausible story and gave an address in the town, that he would not lock up the fellow, though someone might be told to keep an eye on him. After all he had not stolen the car, which was still at Greystones, and so far the charge against him was only one of attempted theft. The fact that he had stayed and eaten his dinner in a friendly fashion with the other servants at Greystones, was an additional proof of the innocence of

his intentions, at all events in Mr. Smithers' mind. It was possible that Green had made a night of it, and the other man did not want to give his fellow chauffeur away. It was merely ill-advised of him not to have explained the position to Mr. Preston. Smithers knew that the old gentleman was inclined to be what he called "cranky" in a car, and it seemed credible that Green had warned his representative that his employer was easily frightened. To most people one professional chauffeur was as good as another, but Mr. Preston was capable of becoming nervous about a strange driver.

"These fellows don't want to lose their jobs," thought Smithers. He was quite prepared to show that he could rise superior to Scotland Yard, when Scotland Yard was evidently in a blue funk.

The fact was that the week before Smithers, as police inspector, had made a mistake, in charging and keeping in custody for several days a perfectly innocent man, accused of stealing his neighbour's wheelbarrow, whereas his neighbour's wife, who was a "saucy piece," had required some earrings, pawned the said wheelbarrow, visited Woolworth's, and accused a perfectly honest and respectable man of the theft. Sir John Elgin happened to be in the chair on the day that this man was brought before the Bench, and had rather sharply criticised Smithers. The inspector did not want to have another case of "wrongful detention" laid to his charge. On occasion Sir John had a somewhat cutting edge to his tongue.

Therefore Smithers made up his mind to deal

very leniently with the man accused of stealing Mr. Preston's hired car; in fact to give him the benefit of the doubt, just because Margetson and the rest of them at Greystones were in a state of nerves over the business. Smithers had never thought much of Margetson's evidence against Mr. Preston, having known that gentleman for a number of years, both on the Bench and off it. "There aren't such a lot of men as you'd go bail for that they wouldn't commit a murder," Smithers considered, "but I'd have staked my last ha'penny on Mr. Preston. I don't know as I'd have said as much for some of the others on the Bench. His Lordship, with a drop of drink on board, might have done most things, out of mere silliness like, and Sir John has a kind of cold rage about him sometimes. I shan't forget in a hurry what he was like when his son was killed. I know he was just cursing like hell in his own mind. I wouldn't have given a brass bob for any conshy who got in his way just then, and yet he was cold, like a bit of frozen iron or something that takes the skin off you if you touch it, and my word, I don't want no more of his dashed remarks, like I had over that wheelbarrow. He knows how to say things that cut like a knife—he does . . . now Mr. Preston—he's peppery if you like, and as clever and impatient as they make 'em, but soft-hearted . . . that sort don't commit murder, bless 'em, not they. But Mr. Margetson thinks Scotland Yard knows a damned sight better than anyone else. I expect all this excitement about the chauffeur's pure gas. He must be after somebody. Well, it's his job,

I suppose, and he didn't seem even to have asked the fellow's name. I might have known if he was one of the usual crowd at the *Thorell Arms*."

Smithers was going through the ordinary routine work in his office, and expected to have the accused man brought in to him in the usual manner, but all at once he heard a most extraordinary noise, clatter and shouting, outside the police station. He did not connect it with the Greystones case—it sounded like a very noisy " drunk and disorderly "—but he got up and went out to the door, followed by the constable on duty. A struggle of almost unprecedented violence was going on. It was the Greystones prisoner, to whom Smithers had been prepared to show mercy rather than justice. He knew in a moment that this was no ordinary case of attempted theft. The prisoner's strength was evidently abnormal, securely handcuffed as he was he had somehow taken Pierce by surprise and knocked him down; he lay, apparently insensible, in the gutter. The prisoner was shouting out a stream of filthy abuse, relapsing at intervals into words of some strange language. Smithers had only once heard anything like it, when he took up a foreign seaman who had ill-treated his wife, and he had no idea what language—or languages—the man had used, but it sounded extraordinarily evil—a devil's language anyhow—thought Smithers, and it was startling to hear it breaking the silence of a sunny spring afternoon in the sleepy little town of Calverstoke.

By the time that Smithers had got to the door the man had evidently nearly brought off his attempt to bolt, swinging his long, powerful arms round viciously to keep off his captors, but he had not been quite quick enough. Wilkins, following him out of the car, had caught him from behind by the coat-collar, and was half-choking him, because his chauffeur's livery coat buttoned up close round the neck. He was kicking ferociously, trying to reach Wilkins with his foot, but the constable, who had been driving the car, had thrown a big heavy overcoat at him, muffling his feet. Smithers and the duty constable dashed out and seized him, one by each arm, and Wilkins' strangle-hold began to tell. They hauled him, struggling, biting, swearing, kicking, into the police station, but it took the four men all their time to hold him, handcuffed as he was. Smithers was astounded. The fellow was as strong as a bull. No question about it, Margetson was right, the lock-up was the only place for him. They got him tied up at last, still screaming and swearing, and then searched him. There was a revolver in his hip-pocket, loaded, and in another pocket a small packet of white powder, which Smithers concluded was poison, but it proved afterwards to be only a French preparation of morphia. Nothing else incriminating was discovered, no letters or papers, beyond a leather case containing Green's driver's licence. Wilkins was active in the searching, his blood was up, as Smithers could see, quiet man as he was normally. All at once he produced out of the pocket where the revolver had

been found a tiny, much crumpled bit of paper, a narrow blue strip with something written on it.

Wilkins exclaimed, "Miss Eleanor's writing!"

He smoothed out the fragment; it was an ordinary slip, about two inches wide, four inches long, such as is used in most offices, with Eleanor Wentworth's name, the address at Greystones and two dates, written on it in her own hand.

The prisoner glared at it. "These bloody clothes belong to Green," he said. "I don't know anything about it."

For the first time he stopped swearing, and looked frightened—hunted.

He could not guess that if he had allowed himself to be taken quietly into the police-station he might have left it that same afternoon as a free man, because Inspector Smithers meant to assert his right to private judgment, and Detective Sergeant Margetson had been delayed.

. . . . . .

Margetson went back to Greystones House quickly after he had telephoned to Smithers, only to give instructions to the constables on special duty, and to commandeer Wilkins to drive him into Calverstoke. To his great annoyance and dismay he could not find the chauffeur anywhere. Crutcher at last informed him that Wilkins had gone with the prisoner, though Margetson had told him that it was not necessary for him to go. The local public-house had a small garage and a couple of cars that could be hired. Margetson rushed hastily into the village, cursing the wounded

arm that prevented him from driving himself. Both cars were out.

He came back to the house once more, raging, and found that there was only one method open to him to reach Calverstoke that night. He borrowed Crutcher's bicycle. There was a bus, from about half-way, Crutcher told him doubtfully, but probably he would miss it.

Margetson had not ridden a bicycle for a long time and he departed shakily and uncomfortably. It was the only thing to be done. As he went, he racked his brain to remember where he had seen the pseudo-Green before.

All at once it came back to him. The man had been in the lift at Scotland Yard the day that he and Anthony were there.

CHAPTER XIV

When Anthony and Molly arrived almost simultaneously at Greystones the next morning, they were greeted by Robert Preston in a thoroughly complacent frame of mind, and Wilkins in a state that can only be described as swaggering.

"I watched the fellow, sir, I did, like a cat with a mouse, all the way to Calverstoke. I'd felt a lump under the top of his trousers at the back, and I knew what it was. If he could have got his hands free he'd have made short work of us, and I do believe as that gumph of a constable from Calverstoke would have taken off the darbies if I hadn't been there, such a wheedling tongue the chap had. Said he'd been wounded in the wrist during the war, and having his hands tied together like that gave him a hell of a pain, promised and vowed he wouldn't move. 'How could I,' says he, 'with both of you here?'

"'That's true,' says Pierce the constable, a softy if ever there was one. I had to speak out at last, 'Look here, Pierce,' I says, 'the fellow's got a revolver in his pocket. If you want to go to kingdom come this evening,' says I, 'I can tell you I don't. If you want to slip off those darbies you can stop the

car and I'll get out first. You'll probably never know what Mr. Smithers'll say."

"Good for you, Wilkins," said Anthony. "So you got him safely into quod?"

"Yes, sir, as it was, when we arrived he kicked like the devil and nearly brained Pierce even with his hands tied together, but Mr. Smithers was there, and another constable. The gentleman took some holding, I can tell you, sir! He was as slippery as an eel and as strong as a horse. I'd lay my bottom dollar that's the bloke what did for poor Miss Eleanor. He had this address in her writing in his pocket. His face was like a devil when he was fighting."

"I wish that I could have seen him," said Molly, a little regretfully. "Grandpapa seems to have had all the fun."

"You have strange ideas of fun," said her grandfather. "I wish you had had to stay with the Underwoods."

. . . . . .

Once more the magistrates at Calverstoke had a man accused of the murder of Eleanor Wentworth brought before them, and a crowded Bench on this occasion was glad enough to remand him in custody, until the police could complete their evidence. The prisoner gave his name as Albert Smith, and the address of a bank in the Whitechapel Road, where he said that he was known. He seemed to have recovered himself, apologized for having lost his temper and injured Pierce, but

declared that he knew nothing whatever about Greystones or the murder.

Margetson proceeded very carefully. The fact that Smith had doped Mr. Preston's chauffeur in a way that by the merest chance had not cost the chauffeur's life, apparently in order to get into Greystones House himself; the revolver, and the bit of blue paper with the address in Miss Wentworth's writing, found in his pocket; and last, but not least, his remarkably violent behaviour at the police station, formed the only undoubted evidence against him. Nevertheless, as Margetson said, it was evidence that called for further examination. It was by no means certain that the man had given his real name, and the police asked for a remand until his identity could be proved.

The prisoner's defence was that Green had had toothache, and after several disturbed nights, had taken a sleeping draught himself, and had asked his fellow chauffeur to drive for him the next morning. Smith declared that he had had no intention to deceive Mr. Preston, and would have explained that Green was ill, if he had been asked. He claimed, with great indignation, that he had been very badly treated. When asked to say why he carried a revolver, and a packet of the somewhat unusual preparation of opium with which Green had been dosed, he only shrugged his shoulders. He had to drive all sorts of people, often in very deserted places; the revolver was a precaution. The drug and the bit of blue paper both belonged to Green. He said that he had put on Green's

livery in order to look respectable for Mr. Preston, as his own clothes were shabby, but it was very quickly proved that he was not wearing Green's trousers, boots or gaiters, which were all much too small for him, and moreover they had all remained in the room Green had occupied at the *Thorell Arms*. Smith had taken only his linen coat, which was very loose, and a cap-cover for his own cap. All the suspected articles had been found in Smith's own trouser-pockets, but he was quite unmoved, and said that he had taken a handkerchief and the other things out of the coat-pockets and put them into his own pockets for safer keeping.

The next time that he appeared before the Bench, one of the managers of the bank at Whitechapel appeared to say that Smith had been employed there as a temporary clerk chiefly because he knew some obscure Russian dialects which were wanted fairly often in the district, but he had other jobs as interpreter and had been away lately for some weeks. The manager said that Smith was a good linguist. Anthony, who was present in court, looked at Margetson. They both knew that the man had been with them in the lift at Scotland Yard, when Anthony, half in joke, had mentioned Arcos.

Green also appeared, denied that he had ever taken a sleeping draught—or wanted one—in his life, and swore that Smith must have given him the drug without his being aware of it. Further, he denied that he had ever even heard Miss Wentworth's name, or seen her writing. He had

never been at Greystones. Robert Preston corroborated that statement. He had never mentioned his niece or her tragic fate to Green, who could not possibly have seen her writing.

It was practically the word of one chauffeur against the other, though no one really suspected Green of the murder, and witnesses had been brought from Ely to prove not only his identity and respectability, but that he had actually been at Ely at the time of the murder. Still the case seemed to hang fire, until the manager of the Whitechapel bank suddenly volunteered the information that Smith had been employed sometimes at the Foreign Office as an interpreter in some of those same obscure dialects which made him useful at the bank. The manager evidently thought that he was doing Smith a good turn by mentioning the fact, as a voucher for his steadiness and reliability, but the prisoner glowered at him. Margetson looked triumphant, and observed that now they knew where Smith had found the strip of blue paper.

Sir John Elgin was in the chair, and asked for evidence from the Foreign Office itself before the prisoner could be committed for trial.

So the case dragged on, but later Smith was identified by two officials from the Foreign Office, who also declared that he had been in the office on the day that the docket, afterwards found in Eleanor's room, had disappeared. He had an open pass as interpreter, though he was only occasionally employed. No one had suspected him, but directly the paper was missed a strict super-

vision over all visitors was instituted, and everyone —whether they had a pass or not—was personally identified and carefully watched. As it happened, Smith had not been in the office after the loss of the paper had been discovered. His services as interpreter had not been required, and no one had paid any attention to his absence. He had been employed off and on for some years, and there had been no reason to suspect him.

The fact remained that the docket that had been last in Miss Wentworth's hands had vanished, and in some way or other Smith had become possessed of her address. The slip was the sort of thing that she usually gave to the correspondence clerk of her section when she went away. The dates on it were those of her last departure and the day when she expected to return. The clerk remembered that she had not given him a slip on that occasion, she had looked into his room on her way out and told him what her address would be, and he had written it down himself.

It was no doubt chiefly on the evidence of that bit of paper that Albert Smith was committed for trial at the next assizes.

Anthony, however, came back to his father that night very much dejected. "It is all so beastly thin," he said. "The case against you was really much better, because now everything depends on Eleanor's having brought that infernal docket down here, and I'd put my shirt on it that she did not. Smith may have picked up that slip at the F.O., but it would mean nothing, unless he knew

that she had the docket. They all take it for granted that she brought the beastly thing here, and somehow or other—in my bones—I know that she did not."

Robert, for all his impatient tendencies, could be sympathetic. Moreover, he agreed with his son. They were both well acquainted with that curious streak of nervous conscientiousness in Eleanor. There was no getting away from it. She used to laugh and declare that she was very dull, as she could never mention any subject connected with her work, because, though she might be quoting from the *Daily Mail*, everyone would take it for granted that her knowledge was official. No one else in her position would have minded if they did, but Eleanor was only too evidently nervous about disclosing "secrets."

On the other hand if she had not the docket in her possession there was no conceivable reason why she should have been followed or murdered.

"Smith might have picked up that slip," said Anthony, "if Eleanor dropped it, in the lift or anywhere, and put it in his pocket without any particular design. If he had said that, there would have been little reason to doubt him, but he sticks to the story that he took it out of Green's pocket with a handkerchief, which is absurd. I think we can rule Green out of the question."

Robert agreed. "We need not bother about Green. If that slip had not been found in Smith's pocket we should not have been justified in bothering about him, but I still believe firmly that he wanted

to get into this house—confound him! The docket was presumably here; he could not possibly know that the police had taken it away."

"He was in the lift at Scotland Yard the day that I went there with Margetson to enquire about your car."

"Was he indeed? Has Margetson found out what he was doing there?"

"Yes, oddly enough, it was in connection with you. He came to inform the Yard that your car was at Cambridge. That is all right. Green says he made Smith's acquaintance at Cambridge."

"Then why did you go to Ely?"

"Oh, the mistake about the number as usual. The Yard did not think it worth while to tell me. Margetson is trying to find out how Smith came to be at Cambridge at all."

"I heard one rather odd thing from Wilkins to-day," Anthony went on, "which I must tell Margetson. You know we took your dog, Patch, into Calverstoke to-day for the vet to see him. Wilkins brought him down to the Court to meet me afterwards, but we had all gone, and the police were bringing out their prisoners. Wilkins says that Patch made one bound for Smith, was all over him in a moment, frightfully pleased and friendly. Smith did not like it at all, swore hotly at the dog—he has some language at command, that fellow—especially when one of the warders said, 'Well, he seems to know you anyhow.'

"Smith said, 'I wonder who the hell he thinks I am? I've never seen the b——y brute before—

and don't want to see him again.' Wilkins was a good bit impressed. You know those two nights that someone certainly got into the house, Patch never barked."

"That is true," said Robert, "and Patch is not everyone's friend. You can't deceive a dog."

"Wilkins was convinced that Patch knew Smith. He said that the dog welcomed him ecstatically, trembled all over, wagged his tail, and whined his most affectionate whine." Anthony laughed. "Wilkins declares that Patch never whines like that for him or for anyone but Mr. Preston and the butcher boy! I hope you are flattered by the way in which he divides his affections."

"I knew it before—cupboard love—cupboard love—he's not disinterested; how many people are? Anthony—it is important—that man has fed Patch, not once, but several times, and given him what he likes to eat too."

Anthony groaned. "I shall have to tell Margetson. I can't stand talking to the fellow now, because he will take it for granted that Eleanor brought that docket down here."

"Someone brought it," said Robert, dryly, "because undoubtedly it was here."

"I could believe more readily that Margetson brought it himself."

"I don't suspect that Margetson murdered Eleanor," said Robert, "although he did suspect me."

"We go round and round in a circle," said Anthony, gloomily.

"The first thing a detective has to discover," said Robert, "is the motive for a crime. If there isn't one, you must invent it. Criminals are always logical, every detective story you read will tell you that. Take away the docket, and there is no motive for the murder of Eleanor."

"Except your dislike of her attitude about the Colquhoun papers."

Robert laughed. "I think you would rather see your father hanged than allow that Eleanor brought that docket down here."

"Well—but I am just as certain that she didn't as I am that you didn't," said Anthony. "The one idea is as preposterous as the other."

"I should tell Margetson about Patch."

"It may be only that the fellow has a dog of his own, whose aroma is agreeable to Patch."

"Tut!" said Robert, "lots of people have dogs. Patch is not so easily led astray. No, no, Patch has made friends with the fellow, and the one sure road to his affections is through his stomach."

"Feed the brute!" said Anthony, grinning. "Well, that wasn't said of a dog, and you are Patch's god, although you don't feed him."

Robert's shoulder went up. "I don't always notice when he goes after a rabbit," he observed.

It was possibly the next day that a man came up the drive with a basket on his arm, and Anthony saw Patch gambolling round him, whimpering and whining in the most ecstatic manner.

"Another friend of our guardian angel, Patch?"

Anthony enquired of Crutcher, who was sweeping the drive.

"Don't know much about angels," said Crutcher, leaning on his broom, "that's the butcher boy. There's only Mr. Preston and him for Patch, except there was a gypsy fellow who was about here a day or two afore Miss Eleanor died, selling baskets he was, and I s'pose he sold cats' meat too, because he gave Patch a bit more'n once. Mrs. Crutcher saw him out of bedroom winder. The missus can't abide gypsies, knows too much of 'em. She wouldn't have none of his baskets and she sent him off with a flea in his ear, but I saw him again, more'n once. Patch knew him all right. I wondered if he wanted to steal the dog."

"Would you know him again if you saw him?" asked Anthony, hopefully, but Crutcher shook his head. "One gyppo's as like another as two peas," he said, "there ain't a pin's point to choose atween 'em, to look at. I ain't Patch to reckernize the cats' meat."

"So that was how Patch was silenced," thought Anthony, "and he did recognise Smith."

The little link, insignificant as it might prove to be, was duly imparted to Margetson, who still seemed to be far from satisfied about the case. "I can't get beyond Smith's landlady, with whom he lodged when he was clerking at that bank. I believe she knows more than she says, but she is frightened of telling me. I don't believe that the fellow's name is Smith, and I can't find out yet why a bank-clerk, sufficiently well educated to

be employed as an interpreter at the Foreign Office, should be doing odd jobs as a chauffeur at Cambridge. If he was connected with the Arcos company, I conclude that he was after the Prince of Wales, who stayed in Cambridge for a night before Mr. Preston left ; God only knows what Smith thought he could find out. It is easy enough to get taken on by a garage when there is a press of work. The managers don't ask for much reference, beyond a clean licence and some sort of voucher that a fellow can drive different makes of car. There are plenty of such men to be had. A lot of them learnt to drive during the war. If one doesn't suit, the garage can get another as quick as they like. I suppose it pays, with tips and so on, better than private work, and the men are more independent."

Anthony still felt restless and dissatisfied. He was sure that Margetson was taking another wrong turning, because he would not, or could not, believe that Eleanor had not brought that docket with her. Two or three days later, Anthony and Molly came down together to stay at Greystones, and Anthony arrived in a state of excitement, hardly able to get into the study where Robert was sitting, before he began : " It is just what I always said. Eleanor no more brought that docket down here than I did. I've been to the F.O. to find out what was in that blessed paper. It had absolutely nothing to do with Eleanor or her work. She would no more have wanted it here than the man in the moon."

" What was it ? " asked Robert.

"Daddy won't tell me," said Molly, discontentedly, "and Mr. Margetson becomes puce with passion, or rigid with rage, if you ask him."

"I should have said he became tremulous with tears," said Anthony. "A bare whisper of anything so secret turns his bones to water."

Molly shrugged her shoulders, "Will you tell Grandpapa if I go away?"

"Yes, you minx, I will! He won't repeat it to every Tom, Jack and Harry of his acquaintance. It isn't the only secret he will carry to his grave."

Molly made a face at her father, an entrancing face, full of impudence, affection and contempt. "As if Grandpapa had any secrets from me!" she said, and curtsied to them both. "Fare you well, reverend gentlemen, but if you don't tell me, someone else will, a little bird, methinks."

Off she went, and the two men laughed. "I don't suppose that wild horses would drag it out of her if we did tell her," said Anthony, "but she wouldn't be able to resist the temptation of saying that she knew, and if that came round to Margetson he'd get me locked up for *lèse majesté* or contempt of court, or something."

"I don't believe he will ever be satisfied until he gets one of us locked up," said Robert. "Fire away, my boy, what was it?"

"The key to a cipher," said Anthony. "I don't know what cipher, and I don't know the key."

"Why did it come to Eleanor? She had nothing to do with ciphers."

"Of course not! That is the point. It seems

that in order to bamboozle some of these international spies and people, it was decided to go back to a comparatively simple form which had been disused for fifty years or more. It is a double sort of thing, like question and answer, rather ingenious, so I was told, and quite unlike anything modern. It seems that the Arcos people got hold of messages sent in that cipher, but could not lay hands on the key. Some important information had already been sent in that form, which our people don't want to have handed round, and they are particularly anxious to know if Arcos could ever have had the key. The police raided them to find out. You can see how important it might be, not so much the actual information, but who knows it?"

"But what had *Eleanor* to do with it?"

"Nothing at all! She did not even know what it meant. She happened to be working on papers of the date when the cipher was first invented, and a batch of them had just been sent to her. John Davidson, who is one of the cipher experts at the Foreign Office, merely sent the key to her to check with the original key, which happened to be in that batch. She never saw the cipher, and the key must have been quite unintelligible to her. All that they wanted from her was to see that the new form was correct, and to give them the number and date of the original paper for future reference. Davidson sent the docket to her by his secretary, a fellow called Stephens, who gave it to her himself. From that moment no one knows what happened to it, until it was found in Eleanor's room here. Stephens

never had it again ; he says she wouldn't have sent it by a messenger. She minuted it, merely to say that the form tallied with the original form, and gave the number and date that were required. She signed the minute and dated it, the day before she came down here. Of course, it wasn't quite usual. They keep ciphers to one room as a rule, but the thing had been disused for so long, and it was quite a new idea to make it current again. It gives one a bit of a shock, to think of Eleanor, working away, checking that key, going through the usual routine, and coming down here, without the slightest idea of what was before her. I feel certain that she took it to Stephens' room and it was stolen from there."

"And I was so angry with her," said Robert, "I can't bear to think of it."

"Oh, don't think of it ! Eleanor wouldn't care. She was devoted to you, and wouldn't mind what you said, except that she would have been sorry to displease you. But, don't you see, this docket had nothing to do with her, or her work. She had no reason in the wide world, no motive, for bringing it here—Margetson talks such a lot about motives for crime, but why doesn't he consider motives for other things as well ? Why should Eleanor take the trouble to cart about a paper that was absolutely useless to her ? It had no interest, a string of letters and numbers, quite meaningless, unless you knew the cipher. I understand that it was ingenious in that way. The cipher of course meant nothing without the key, or the key without the cipher. Davidson says that together they were quite simple."

"I suppose that is like most ciphers, or codes," said Robert, "but I am afraid it looks as if—we know that it is impossible—it looks as if she had brought it here to give to someone else to whom it *would* be useful."

"That is Margetson's argument. Of course he did not know Eleanor. You and I are as certain as we can be of anything in this world that she would have done nothing of the kind."

"Of course, of course, I don't doubt Eleanor, but I am thinking of outside opinion—the man in the street, you know—the bare fact that she could want it for no other reason is embarrassing. How did the fellow who came to look for it after her death know that it was here?"

Anthony got up and walked about the room. "Was it here?" he said.

CHAPTER XV

A few days later Anthony told his father that the Grand Jury had returned a true bill, and that Smith was to be tried at the Central Criminal Court, before Mr. Justice Crayshaw, in the course of the next few weeks. He was not to be kept waiting for the next local assizes.

"Who is going to defend Smith?" asked Robert, rather wearily; his "reserve of pugnacity" was wearing thin. This long distasteful business was beginning to tire him out.

"Lucius Barnaby, no one could have a better man, brute, but able, very able, and not over-scrupulous."

"And against him, for the Crown?"

"Sir Andrew Mallock, you have met him, haven't you?"

"Yes, of course, his son was at Trinity last year, wasn't he, when I stayed with you? But think of Eleanor—why should her most lamentable death be made a *cause célèbre?* I can't bear it. Barnaby will try to drag her name in the dust. I know his style. Someone said not long ago that Barnaby's method generally left both plaintiff and defendant with neither a scrap of character nor a rag of reputation with which to cover their nakedness."

"I know it is only a shade worse to have him against you than for you."

Anthony moved restlessly, the case was getting on his nerves too, but it was useless to attempt to talk of anything else.

"Let us thresh it out," he suggested. "We have only three facts to go upon, the rest is all guess-work. Margetson said that everything went in threes."

I can only think of two—the murder and the docket."

"You forget the slip of blue paper with Eleanor's address, oh, yes, and we have a fourth fact now, Patch's recognition of Smith. There were no end of witnesses that day at Calverstoke, when Patch fawned upon him, prison warders and policemen and all kinds of people. It is no good for the man to say that he has never been here before. Patch is a native of Greystones, born and bred. He has never been further afield than Calverstoke in his whole existence. If Smith says he did not make friends with him here, he's a liar. The dog has never been anywhere else."

"You can't take the dog into court, I believe," said Robert.

"It wouldn't be much good. Patch would be too busy trying to bite the rest of the company. You know what he's like if we have any sort of crowd here—the flower-show or anything—he always has to be tied up. The thing won't fit. I can't get at it myself. It is like a jig-saw puzzle with a piece missing. What is the piece? For

the sake of argument let us agree that Eleanor could only have brought the docket here to dispose of it to someone else. The answer to that is firstly, that she could have disposed of it much more easily in London, and secondly, if she intended it for someone else, why did he murder her? You see what an *impasse* it is. Margetson is beginning to think that some third person is implicated, for whose benefit she brought the docket here, and that this fellow Smith is an outsider who came to steal it."

"Far fetched," said Robert.

"Out of the question," said Anthony.

"We must see what counsel will make of it."

"An unholy mess, no doubt, about as far from the truth as possible. By the by, Harman, the solicitor who is in charge of the case for the Crown, is coming down here for a night next week."

"I know Harman," said Robert testily. "My port isn't good enough for him; he will be seriously prejudiced against us. No, I won't have the fellow here."

"There are still two bottles of the 96," said Anthony seriously. "But I thought they'd do to drink the girls' healths when they get engaged to be married—just a bottle each."

"What do *girls* know about port, keep it for young Tony."

"I think Harman must have it. These fellows require to be mellowed."

"Well, yes, he is about the age for that. Looks as if he'd gone to sleep in the reign of George IV,

and waked up in surprise to find that George V was on the throne."

Mr. Harman did come for a night, looking less like Mr. Pickwick than might have been expected from the foregoing conversation, and his first discovery was made as they went up to dress for dinner soon after his arrival. He announced it triumphantly. "Look here, Mr. Preston, the fellow must have been hidden under the stairs! The place is positively made for it, among all those garden chairs and things. You could hide there in the dark for a week on end, and no one would be any the wiser."

"We do have it cleaned out sometimes," said Anthony, apologetically.

That gave Harman his next clue, he asked to see the servants, and in his rather pompous didactic manner got under Kate's guard at once by taking it for granted that she had come down the front stairs in the early morning. He remarked as if he knew all about it, "I suppose you heard a little noise and thought it was the dog?"

Kate stammered. "Yes, sir, but afterwards I thought it was rats."

"Why rats? Are there any in the house?"

"Mrs. Crutcher says so, sir."

"Did you tell Mr. Margetson about the rats?"

"N-n-no, sir, he never asked."

"We have it all pretty pat now," said Mr. Harman afterwards to Anthony. "The fellow came here as a gypsy, fed Patch, got into the house by the garden door while the party were dressing for dinner, anyone can see that is not difficult, hid

under the stairs, and was actually heard moving by your housemaid in the morning. What was Margetson about that he did not find out as much as that? How could the fellow get away without being seen? I have been studying the plan you sent me, you have two gates to the drive and a door in the far corner of the kitchen garden wall. Then there is the long walk by the tennis ground, which leads to the coppice and the road. Of course on the opposite side of the garden there is the farmyard and the fields through which he might escape. I think you said that you can get into the open country or the churchyard that way, but he would have to pass in front of the house, and your cowman is out early, no doubt. I think we can rule that out. If he went through the back door—I gather that Kate opened it first—he would have been afraid of the drive, because Wilkins and the gardeners arrive that way. Could he get into the kitchen-garden, anyhow?"

"Yes." Anthony took Mr. Harman out, and showed him the little stone-paved courtyard on to which the back door opened. Beyond it was the large stable yard with the Crutchers' cottage, and, turning slightly to the right, the wall of the kitchen garden, with a door in the corner nearest to the house, and Patch's kennel not far off.

"Do you lock this door at night?"

Anthony shook his head. "I don't think so. My brothers and I lost the key at some time or other. Patch is supposed to look after it, and you can see it from the Crutchers' cottage."

"Hum! We quite understand the bribery of

Patch. I don't suppose he often gets raw meat. The Crutchers were probably dressing sleepily and not looking out of the window. It was evidently a well-thought-out scheme. I should say there was some organisation with brains behind this fellow. The police will have to discover all that."

Mr. Harman went out and studied the garden. The door through the wall in the far corner of the kitchen garden opened into the road, but he was told that that door was invariably locked at night generally by the head gardener on his way home. Sometimes he came in that way in the morning, though more often by the drive. "It seems obvious," said Mr. Harman, "that the fellow escaped across the kitchen garden. The walls on three sides kept him in, but there is no fourth wall where the herbaceous border and the tennis ground are. He could get away quite easily to the gate at the end of the long walk, and keep out of sight by pushing through the shrubbery on the road side of the walk."

"The one thing necessary," said Anthony, "is a motive. If the fellow were only a burglar, I can hardly believe that he would tempt Fate a second time. We have nothing of sufficient value for him to steal."

"There was the document!" said Mr. Harman. "Everything seems to depend on that. The police have to find out whether Smith is connected with some organisation that would make it worth his while, not only to commit murder in order to get hold of it, but to run a very serious risk of discovery by his second attempt."

"That is where your puzzle does not fit," said Anthony. "Not only my father and I, but the professors for whom my cousin worked at the Foreign Office, everyone in fact who knew her at all intimately, are prepared to go bail for the fact that she did not bring it here. We don't lay claim to any superior virtue for her, she was just an ordinary, sensible, honourable Englishwoman, but she would have been too nervous, too frightened of consequences. Fear is sometimes the ally of good as well as of evil."

Mr. Harman shook his head doubtfully; like most men of his generation he distrusted the independent woman. He went back to the house and made Kate act her part. She was to come down the stairs exactly as she had come on the morning after the murder. Mr. Harman, who was nothing if not thorough, concealed himself under the stairs. Mr. Preston's absence, and other reasons, had served to keep all the garden apparatus in its usual place, indoors. Anthony and Molly had talked vaguely of putting up the tennis nets, but they had done no more, everything remained just as it had been on the night of the murder. Mr. Harman sat down on one of the garden chairs, with his feet protruding a little beyond the recess formed by the staircase. He asked Kate if she could see them. By hanging over the banisters she could, but as she explained, she had not looked. Anyone hiding there might, however, have been afraid that she would look. Mr. Harman drew them in, and as he did so, touched the loose paper wrapping of a box of tennis balls.

Kate stopped on the stairs, and cried out in an agitated voice, "That is the sound I heard, sir, just like that—like a bit of paper rustling."

Mr. Harman asked her to go on and show him exactly what she had done. He offered no explanation of the rustle. "Anything might have caused it," he said.

She went through all the proceedings of that fateful morning, quite exactly, because Anthony had put up the shutters, bolted and barred the doors. When she came back to the library Mr. Harman had disappeared. She had not heard him go.

"I timed it," he told Anthony afterwards. "There was plenty of time to get out of the back door before she had finished with the front door. Why didn't you try all this before?"

"Because Kate never allowed that she had heard any sound at all. There was nothing to suggest the stairs as a hiding place. For some reason Margetson dropped the idea that anyone had got into the house. The fact is, whoever it was, carried away no spoil. Until that document was discovered, we had no clue to any possible motive for the crime."

But the case remained a mystery up to the day when the trial opened. Anthony and his father, Wilkins, Kate and the Crutchers were subpœna-ed to appear as witnesses, and Molly behaved very badly, because she was not also called upon to appear. Her father, for once in his life, acted the part of a stern parent, and told her that she was not to attend the trial, but Molly, being young and human, forgot his injunctions, suborned a useful undergraduate friend to go with her, and appeared among the

spectators in the crowded court. Anthony saw her at once, of course, and was very angry, though less so than his own father, who recognised only the usual rebellion of youth against duly instituted authority.

"If she were my daughter," he said to his son, "I would drag her out by the hair, if necessary."

Anthony shrugged his shoulders. "Not enough hair to hold on to," but he was disappointed. Molly had never disobeyed him so flagrantly before. He looked at her as if she were a stranger, made no sign of recognition, and would not look at her again.

In less than a quarter of an hour, Robert, with a chuckle, told him that Molly had gone, and Anthony felt better able to tackle the serious business in hand. The fact being that Molly could not enjoy herself while she was being given the cut direct by her father. There is something to be said for modern methods. He had some influence after all.

"The most important witness in the case is Patch," said Anthony, "and I suppose his evidence would not be accepted in a court of law."

Sir Andrew Mallock opened the case in the usual dry fashion, traditional in prosecuting counsel, but he made at once a somewhat unexpected statement. The prisoner's name as charged in Court was Albert Smith, but that, said Sir Andrew, was only one of many *aliases*. "The police have discovered that he was also Johannes Schmidt, Pierre Coude, and other names which it is unnecessary to specify, the last discovered, by which I propose to call him, is Nicolas Brusiloff, but he may have adopted that name because he had heard of the great Russian

general. I have little doubt that he has as much—or as little—right to it as to any of the others, but there is no actual crime in adopting different names at different times, if your motives for so doing will bear examination, and perhaps especially, as in Brusiloff's case, if you don't know what your patronymic really is. We have discovered also that he was—or we strongly suspect that he was, it is not easy to prove—in the employment of the Arcos Company, and also at different times, in the employment of other companies, or associations, who traded, as far as we know, only in official documents and political information obtained by secret, and certainly illegal means."

Then Sir Andrew told the story as Mr. Harman had worked it out. "Brusiloff," he said, "had gone to Greystones, on the instigation of one of these companies, to find a document which they urgently wanted, and believed to be in the possession of Miss Wentworth. We shall have to take most of the evidence about the document in *camera*, because it is an official secret paper of great importance, but I can tell you how their agent set to work about getting it. He seems to have prowled about the country for a few days, in the character of a gypsy tramp, selling baskets, and incidentally cats' meat, with which he fed and therefore made friends with and silenced, Mr. Preston's watch dog. This was cleverly conceived, as if he had poisoned the dog, suspicions would have been roused."

Sir Andrew then described the recognition of Brusiloff (or Smith) by Patch, outside the county court at Calverstoke, and said he would call witnesses

to prove that the dog had made friends with a gypsy shortly before the date of the murder, certainly during the time that Miss Wentworth was staying with her uncle. "The dog did not make friends at all readily," said Sir Andrew, and the first burst of "laughter in court" was provoked by his perfectly serious explanation of Patch's former attachment to two human beings only, both because, like Jacob of old, they provided him with the meat —in his case uncooked—that his soul loved. "Mr. Preston, walking about with his dog, on his own property, sometimes turned a blind eye when Patch sought his meat after his kind, by chasing a rabbit, and the butcher boy—well, we all know how the butcher-boy brings meat to our houses, though most of us prefer to turn a blind eye on that process also.

"The only other human being who gave the dog raw meat, probably in what Patch considered a tasty and gamey condition, was the gypsy, and there can be no doubt that he recognised this third friend of his when he flung himself on Brusiloff at Calverstoke. Having in this manner silenced the watch-dog, Brusiloff evidently got into the house through the garden door, which was always left unlocked in the daytime, concealed himself under the staircase, a perfectly simple proceeding, as witnesses who know the house will tell you. He waited there until everyone had gone to bed, except Miss Wentworth, who was writing in the library."

Sir Andrew paused, this was perhaps the inexplicable point in his case, and he knew that his "learned friend" Mr. Barnaby was ready to pounce upon it ;

the inexplicable point being that though he murdered Miss Wentworth, he did not either then, or at any time, obtain—the document.

Sir Andrew continued, "I have explained how Brusiloff got into the house, and I have told you exactly how the opportunity was given to him to murder a defenceless woman. His motive is not hard to understand. He knew—or thought he knew—that she had in her possession a document for which he would doubtless receive a very splendid reward if he could procure it. We can only conclude that she refused to let him have it. Probably she attempted to give an alarm, either by ringing the bell, or calling up the police on the telephone. We can understand that he did not wish to fire the revolver that he habitually carried, as the report would possibly have roused someone else in the house, therefore he snatched up the heavy book with its brass-bound edges—" Sir Andrew indicated where it lay in view of the jury "—and brought it down on her head with such savage force as to kill her. That was easy enough, and the look of extreme, almost mad terror, of which we shall hear, depicted on Miss Wentworth's dead countenance, is not difficult to understand. Her lonely position, Brusiloff's unprepossessing face convulsed with rage—mind you, he was disguised as a filthy tramp, and he is a very big and powerful man—she knew that she was completely at his mercy. No doubt he threatened her, we shall hear of his command of appalling language, before the blow fell. Gentlemen of the jury, this woman—a nervous woman, we are told, alone, out of reach of help, threatened in a

manner to drive her almost out of her wits, yet refused—refused absolutely—to give up the document in question, which she possessed only through her official position, and in fact, rather than betray her trust—we shall hear in what esteem she was held as a confidential servant of the Crown—she met her death at the hands of this scoundrel."

"We know," Sir Andrew went on, "that Brusiloff did not obtain the paper from her, because he made a second attempt to obtain it, and when that failed, he made a third effort to force his way into the house, evidently with the same end in view. The paper was found by the police, among Miss Wentworth's belongings, and is now, safe and intact, in their hands."

Sir Andrew wound up his speech, although still in a manner of studied calm, in a way calculated to leave no doubt of the guilt of Brusiloff.

Mr. Barnaby's line, as he cross-examined the witnesses for the Crown, was at first bewildering. To the great astonishment of both the Prestons he was apparently as determined as they were to prove that the secret paper, which was the only motive for the crime, had not been in Eleanor Wentworth's possession at all. He made not the smallest attempt to blacken her character, on the contrary he displayed great forbearance with her relations, and encouraged them to express their confidence in her, and their absolute conviction that she would never have attempted to carry away from the Foreign Office any document at all. He received with apparent pleasure the evidence of the officials who came to express their complete confidence in her upright-

ness, and also to identify Brusiloff as an interpreter whom they knew.

"Take away the paper, and you remove any incentive to crime on the part of his client," Mr. Harman whispered to Anthony, "it's damned clever. I think he wants to prove that Brusiloff was not employed by anyone to produce the paper, that Miss Wentworth never had it at Greystones, and that it was only brought to the house when the case against Mr. Preston had broken down, by the only possible person who could have brought it—the detective."

"But that would not explain the murder?"

"That don't matter to him. It is not his business to prove anyone's guilt, only his client's innocence. I daresay he will try to set up an *alibi* for Brusiloff, if he gets a shadow of a chance."

The first witness to feel any sharpness in Mr. Barnaby's cross-examination was Kate Parker. She had not hitherto suffered from her original concealment of evidence, because Anthony had forbidden the other servants to talk to her about it, so she told her story in court without much agitation, until Mr. Barnaby began very brusquely, "What were *you* doing on the front stairs?"

He was himself astonished at the effect of so harmless a question, Kate burst into tears and said, "I never did, sir."

"Never did what?"

"Come down the front stairs, only that morning, because—because—" She collapsed altogether, became incoherent, but was understood to say that she was very sorry.

Slowly and with difficulty, the truth was elicited that the reason she had never mentioned before the fact that she had heard that rustle under the stairs was because she had no business to be there at all.

The end of her examination left the jury, or was intended to leave them, under the impression that the girl was a liar, a vain, flighty, empty-headed creature, not worthy of any credence at all.

"This is the real Barnaby!" said Mr. Harman.

Crutcher, with his evidence about the gypsy tramp and the dog proved a harder nut to crack. He was not to be moved. Patch had made friends with the gypsy, Crutcher had no doubt that it was through the lure of raw meat.

No, he could not identify the gypsy and was not going to try.

"You tell me," said Mr. Barnaby, in his most bullying manner, "that you saw this man, knew that he was feeding your master's watch-dog, and did nothing about it?"

"The missus did," said Crutcher.

"What did she do? Why did you leave it to her?"

"Better ask her, herself, sir, if you don't mind," said Crutcher, quite amicably, with a broad grin.

"Look at the prisoner in the dock, do you think he is at all like the gypsy you saw?"

"Can't say, sir, but Patch reckernised him all right at Calverstoke."

"You recognise him as the man who drove Mr. Preston back to Greystones?"

"Yes, sir."

"But not as the gypsy?"

"No sir. I didn't see the gyppo so close. I had to hold on ter this feller, he struggled like the devil, and —"

"I know, you need not tell me about that. The point is that you know Mr. Preston's dog was fed by a gypsy, but you don't recognise the prisoner as that gypsy?"

"No, sir—but I would take my Bible oath as he is, because of Patch."

Mr. Barnaby shrugged his shoulders, "If Patch recognised someone else, me, for instance, would you suppose that I was the gypsy?"

"No, sir, I should only reckon as you'd bin a feedin' of 'im too."

The Court rocked with laughter, and the Judge intervened. Mr. Barnaby, quite unruffled, apparently slightly amused himself, waited for the next witness, but Mrs. Crutcher, though more voluble, was unable to say, any more than her husband, that she recognised the prisoner as the gypsy she had turned off twice from the back door at Greystones, "and told him what I'd do if he came again," she said indignantly, "whinin' to me about his baskets."

"Barnaby is making his point," whispered Mr. Harman. "You can't hang the fellow on the evidence of his recognition by the dog alone."

Brusiloff himself, in the witness box, said very little, apparently quite straightforwardly, gave an account of his actions, declared that he had been employed at the Whitechapel bank on the two dates mentioned, and had been out—with friends—he said, in the evening afterwards, on both occasions.

He had never been at Greystones in his life before he drove Mr. Preston there. The landlord at the *Thorell Arms* had told him how to find the house. He took an odd job sometimes as chauffeur when he wanted a holiday, that was how he came to be at Cambridge; they wanted extra drivers at the garages there while the Prince of Wales was being entertained in the neighbourhood. He repeated what he had said before about Green, and about the slip of blue paper. He could not understand why Mr. Preston's dog had seemed to recognise him, but dogs always liked him, perhaps because he was fond of them. He had never dressed up as a gypsy in his life. He turned a blank face and impervious denials to all Sir Andrew's questions and insinuations about the Arcos Company ; he knew nothing whatever about them.

Mr. Barnaby then produced three witnesses from the bank at Whitechapel, who swore that Smith, as they called him, had been on duty at the bank on the day of Eleanor Wentworth's murder, and on the day of the second burglarious entry into Greystones House.

Sir Andrew cross-examined only one of these witnesses.

" What time does the Bank close ? "

" Four o'clock, sir."

" What time did Smith get away ? "

" We were generally all out by five o'clock, except one of the cashiers and a junior clerk. They stayed and finished the correspondence or booking up that was left over, until the night-watchman came."

"Was Smith on duty as junior clerk on either night?"

"No, sir."

"Thank you. It takes about three hours to get to Calverstoke by train, and not much more by road. If he had started by six o'clock he could have got there before ten, when the garden door at Greystones was locked. His presence in the bank till five o'clock proves nothing, even if you are sure he was there, and you own that his attendance was irregular on account of his interpreter duties?"

"That is true, sir, but we have his signature, on and off, in the attendance book, both days."

"Thank you," said Sir Andrew.

But no one was called who could prove where Smith had spent those evenings after he had left the bank, though the trial lasted for several days, and a long string of witnesses, of somewhat varying nationality, appeared, to vouch for the identity of the prisoner under his different names, to describe the sort of life he lived, the company he frequented. Some of the evidence was in his favour, some most decidedly not.

"Scallywags all! I wouldn't trust a single one of 'em with a ha'penny change," said Anthony to Mr. Harman, "as shifty and revolting a lot as ever I saw. Your crew aren't a bit better than Barnaby's. If that poor devil of a prisoner had sixpence to his credit he could probably have produced any evidence he wanted."

"That is the difficulty," said Mr. Harman, "and we are supposed to have credit, so they come and say what they think we shall like. Yet some of it must

be true. It is a queer thing, but Brusiloff expects some one or other to appear voluntarily on his side. I know that by the way he looks round the court, and his evident eagerness and as evident disappointment every time a new witness is called."

Of course the real crux of that lengthy trial came when counsel for the Crown had to prove Brusiloff's connection with the employers, or "masters" as he called them, in whose interests he was said to be working, and who might be described, as a learned judge described an analogous association at a later date, as "the hireling agents of mere mischief, corrupt and corrupting, trafficking in official secrets for what they could get out of the traffic."

He drew a lurid picture of a gang of desperate men, playing desperate games, hiring themselves out as servants of any shady semi-political anarchical society or association that would pay them. Men of no home and no hope, practically of no nationality, fierce degraded beings, able to speak in practically any language up to a point, from the argot of a thieves' kitchen in Paris to red-hot Muscovite propaganda, or the windy stuff served out in English to long-suffering listeners in the parks of London. Men who had perhaps as their highest ideal some dim notion of serving the "under dog" because that was what they felt themselves to be. Their idea of service being to destroy, when possible, anyone in a more fortunate position than the under-dog. It never occurred to them, unhappy souls, that without such destruction they could make themselves anything but under-dogs in the world as it is to-day. They

thought, as many reformers have thought, and doubtless will continue to think, that it is easier to change the whole world than to change one's own self.

"It is such a man that you have before you," said Sir Andrew, "the police have produced enough evidence to show you the life he has led, the company he has frequented. A man is known by his friends. He worked so secretly, destroying every bit of evidence as he went along, that it is only by such chance as the discovery of that bit of paper in his pocket, his recognition, during a most accidental meeting, by Mr. Preston's watchdog, and his somewhat clumsy attempt once more to enter Mr. Preston's house, by doping his chauffeur, that we have any means of bringing home the crime that he has committed. We do not know how the paper that Brusiloff wanted was introduced into Mr. Preston's house; it was against all Miss Wentworth's traditions and convictions that she should have brought it with her. Certainly she seems to have defended it with her life. She did not bring it to sell or to give to Brusiloff or any agent of his company. That is quite evident, or he would not have killed her. But that he wanted the paper is also evident, because he came back a second time to find it—here again we know that it was Brusiloff because of the absence of any alarm given by the watch dog.

"Brusiloff once more failed to carry away the paper. He was interrupted in his search, and the paper, as we know, was found by Detective Sergeant Margetson in Miss Wentworth's room. There was evidently something stupendous at stake—he

meant to try a third time, and endeavoured to get into the house by the method we all know. About this third attempt there is no doubt and no possible defence."

Then Mr. Barnaby bounded, so to speak, into the arena. His learned friend, he said, had made a beautiful speech, he admired it enormously, but he was obliged to point out that it had remarkably little to do with the question before them. If he might use the metaphor the foundation stone was missing. No one had proved the identity of Smith with Brusiloff. There was no evidence to show that Smith had ever been at Greystones before he drove Mr. Preston there. For his part, he, Barnaby, believed Smith's story. He could not see any reason why the word of the one chauffeur should be preferred to that of the other. Green's contention was very far fetched. Smith was a powerful man, and there was no doubt that he lost his temper when he was arrested, but that was no proof of guilt, perhaps rather the contrary, it showed a hasty sort of fellow, not a cold-blooded intriguer and murderer. Probably many of us would have shown impatience under the circumstances.

"My learned friend," said Mr. Barnaby, "has drawn for us a vivid picture of an international society or guild, whose sole object is to obtain official political secrets by buying—and no doubt selling—at stupendous prices important official documents. That may be; we know all about the raid on the Arcos Company, and we have heard in *camera* about the importance of the document in this case. But there are two bad flaws in the argu-

ment of the prosecution. First, Miss Wentworth did not take that document to Greystones. No one who has heard the evidence to that effect from by far the most important and reliable witnesses in the case, Miss Wentworth's relations and the Foreign Office officials, can possibly doubt her complete innocence. Second, the only connection of Smith with the case is his employment as an occasional interpreter at the Foreign Office. If he had an opportunity to steal the paper there, why should he have left it to the doubtful chance of finding it in Miss Wentworth's possession? His only connection with the type of individual so ably, I may say romantically, drawn for us in a manner worthy of the great criminal novelists—why not criminal novelists, you talk of criminal lawyers, but you don't mean that they commit crime—well, Sir Andrew has spoken to us in a manner worthy of Mr. Edgar Wallace, Mr. van Dyne, or Mr. John Buchan himself, of the background of criminal traffickers in official secrets among whom our poor prisoner lived and moved and had his being. What do you find really? The man—he is certainly of doubtful nationality, does not remember his parents, and does not know his legal patronymic any more than we do—has nothing against him but his truly remarkable talent for acquiring out-of-the-way languages. He has led a wandering life, and he has made use of his talent to earn his living. As interpreter, chiefly for refugees, poor and struggling people, he has no doubt made some unconventional friends. His has been no kid-gloved, rose-watered existence. He has worked hard, and lain in hard

places, no " cushy " jobs for him, no pleasant rooms in—shall we say Scotland Yard ?—no easy hours, no assured position or salary. . . ."

Mr. Barnaby paused, looked from the prisoner in the dock with his intent and frowning face and untidy hair, to where Margetson sat, well groomed and imperturbable, near the solicitors' table, and then took up his story again. " If a man, as has been suggested, is earning huge sums by trafficking in official secrets, is he usually content to live, like Smith, among the classes that struggle on the edge, the razor edge, of penury ? The thing, as said once for all by Euclid, is absurd ! You have heard about the dingy lodgings that Smith inhabited, the miserable meals his landlady prepared for him, the frowsy foreign friends whose company he frequented. I suggest that he has shown more delicacy than we might have expected, because he will not allow us to use the power of the law to call for the evidence that would prove where he spent the two nights that he was supposed to be at Greystones. I assure you that I most honestly believe his statement that he cannot, even at this supreme moment, bring into court a woman whose honour he is bound to respect and protect. Gentlemen of the Jury, there has been an entire misdirection here, I put it to you that Smith had absolutely nothing to do with this case. Miss Wentworth's murderer, much as we lament her death, is still at large."

It is conceivable that if Mr. Barnaby had been content to stop at that point, he might have won the case, but he proceeded by various unpleasant suggestions and implications to throw serious doubt

on the methods by which the document had been found.

"I don't propose," he said, "to enter into the initial mistake made by the police, though that story is highly diverting, but I do suggest that even the best of us are human, and we wish to save our faces. Sometimes he that hides can find."

Mr. Barnaby sat down.

Anthony turned to Mr. Harman, who shook his head and whispered, "The fundamental Barnaby was too strong for him, he *had* to leave some poor wretch without a fig-leaf. . . ."

The Judge summed up, in the entirely fair, unbiassed, barely human, manner required of a judge. It was not a long summing up, but he laid the whole case very clearly before the jury, and every soul in court knew that Brusiloff's fate was sealed. He pointed out that Brusiloff could produce no alibi, either for the night of the murder or for that other night when Eleanor Wentworth's room was entered. He was certainly intimately connected with men who were implicated in the corrupt and corrupting traffic described by counsel for the Crown. The document that provided the only conceivable motive for the crime had been found in Greystones House. The suggestion that some third person had brought it there, he, the Judge, brushed aside as entirely irrelevant. He remarked that it was for the Jury to decide whether they would take the word of Green, a simple young fellow, whose whole career had been laid before them like a limpid stream, concealing nothing, or that of Brusiloff, otherwise Smith, the conditions of whose life at the best

could only be said to be murky and muddled. It was for the Jury to decide whether there was sufficient evidence to prove that Brusiloff had actually made three attempts to obtain that document, a document whose disappearance, they must remember, had caused international complications; that at the first attempt he had murdered a most innocent and courageous woman, who had actually sacrificed her life rather than give up the secret that had been committed to her charge. At the third attempt, if they believed Green's evidence, he had very nearly caused the death of an equally innocent, though totally ignorant individual, whose absence would give him his chance to get into the house where he still believed that the document was concealed.

He, the Judge, considered that last attempt as better evidence of Brusiloff's identity with Miss Wentworth's murderer than any other evidence laid before them, though he did not for a moment suggest that other evidence, such as the dog's recognition of Brusiloff, should be ignored.

The verdict of "Guilty" brought by the Jury, after a very short interval, was only expected, but Mr. Barnaby was no tyro, he pushed through an appeal, and when that failed, a petition for mercy, signed by the unthinking multitudes who do sign such petitions, to the Home Secretary, but that was also refused, and the evening papers on the following day were full of startling headlines:—BRUSILOFF'S CONFESSION—MURDERER'S LAST WORDS—FOREIGN OFFICE MYSTERY SOLVED—ARCOS REVELATIONS—and so forth and so on.

His confession, it must be owned, was made, not out of remorse for the cruel murder of a helpless woman, but out of a desire to be revenged on his "masters" as he called them.

It was after all, if terrible, also a pitiful story. Brusiloff had been employed by the Arcos Company, and they had betrayed him in the end. He had depended on them, or on some of their agents, to provide an unshakable alibi for him for the two nights that he had been at Greystones under their orders, and they would not move a finger on his behalf. Possibly they were too intent on saving what they could from the cataclysm in which they found themselves involved. There was no woman in the case. Brusiloff had listened to Mr. Barnaby's remarks on that subject with his tongue in his cheek. If there had been a woman no scruples about anything so intangible as her good name would have deterred him from calling upon her for evidence. Besides, what had he to do with women of any reputation at all? Mr. Barnaby, or rather the solicitor who was instructing him, did know that there was someone, some unknown person or persons, whose name his client refused to reveal, who might have come forward with a story, true or false, to save the situation. Mr. Harman had been quite right. Throughout the trial Brusiloff had expected help, though from what quarter he would not divulge. So far he had been loyal, but he had no idea at all of the supreme nobility of loyalty to the end. No one had ever taught him the meaning of nobility, except as linked with the class of all others that he hated, despised—and envied.

He had received no reward for his past service, and whether he lived or died he would receive none from his late "masters." He knew that they considered he had failed in the very worst possible manner because he had been found out. According to their rules, if two men were working together, one was instructed to shoot the other if necessary, to escape detection, and his own mad struggle when he was arrested was made with the intention of getting an opportunity to shoot himself, or to swallow that packet of poison which he carried about with him always.

All the same he knew very well that the organization was quite strong enough to save him by a certain amount of false swearing—had it not been done before—and when he found that he was to be treated already as a dead man out of mind, the iron entered into his scarred and tormented soul. He turned and rent whom he could by revealing such secrets as he had. Not half his confession was ever published. The newspapers had to be satisfied with the details of Eleanor Wentworth's murder, which, among other matters of probably far-reaching national importance, was a very small part indeed.

Two things the published confession made quite clear, to the relief of the Prestons, and to the extreme annoyance of Margetson, but as he told himself, he was in the same boat with judge and jury and everyone else who had anything to do with the case.

Brusiloff confessed that he had murdered Eleanor Wentworth, but also that, at the time of the murder, the Foreign Office docket was already in his possession.

Eleanor had not taken the docket to Greystones. She had had no official papers of any kind in her possession. She had not died in a distinguished manner to defend an official secret.

Brusiloff had not wanted to obtain possession of the paper, but to get rid of it.

The man who had been right, from the first moment that the murder was discovered, was Pratt, the village policeman.

"The fellow did her in, in self-defence, I take it," he had said, and that was strictly true.

Margetson's initial mistake was that he conceived the motive for the crime to be anger—not fear. But, as he had said, of the three fundamental motives the greatest is fear, and fear it was.

The Arcos Company were well served, and as all the world knows now, they had learnt beforehand that a police raid was going to be made on their premises to search for the very paper afterwards found at Greystones. In Brusiloff's confession he said that he thought it was the great *coup* of his life when he took it from the table where Eleanor herself had put it, in the room of Sir John Davidson's secretary at the Foreign Office. By mistake she had left with it the blue slip with her address that she meant to give to the correspondence clerk, and Brusiloff said that he took the slip also.

He revealed that directly the raid on Soviet House was known to be imminent he received orders to take the paper that he had "confiscated," as they called it, down to the country house where Miss Wentworth was staying, and by hook or crook, without her knowledge, return it to her. The

Company wanted to get rid of that particular paper in a way which would seem to prove that they had never had it at all. If it were burnt, it would still be supposed that they had destroyed it, and the cipher would not be used again, but if it were found in the possession of a trusted official, as Eleanor was, suspicion would be allayed, and the key might still be of use. Eleanor's signature was the last on the docket, therefore they supposed it would not be unnatural that she should take it with her. Anyhow, that was no concern of theirs. It was too dangerous, once the hue and cry for missing documents had been started, to attempt to return it to the Foreign Office. Brusiloff's instructions were to get into the house at Greystones, discover where Eleanor's papers were kept, and leave it there. No sort of trace must be visible—either that Brusiloff had been in the house, or that he had brought the paper. If necessary she must imagine that she had brought it by mistake.

Brusiloff's actions were almost precisely as they had been outlined by Mr. Harman and Sir Andrew Mallock. He did disguise himself as a gypsy and feed Patch. He did hide under the stairs, and waited until as he thought, everyone had gone to bed, before he went into the library, and he was nearly as much startled as Eleanor herself when he opened the door and found her sitting at the writing-table.

But Sir Andrew was wrong in supposing that he had threatened her with violent language. She was naturally frightened almost to death, and sprang to her feet, clutching the back of her chair, but she

made no sound. In all probability Brusiloff looked like the devil incarnate. In his confession he mentioned that he had added to his "repulsive appearance" by blackening his face, because it helped to make him invisible among the shadows where he had concealed himself.

Neither of them uttered a word, so Brusiloff explained, but Eleanor made an instinctive effort to reach one of the long old-fashioned heavy bell-pulls that hung on each side of the fireplace.

Brusiloff declared that he had no time to think; he dared not fire his revolver, as Sir Andrew had said, because it would rouse the household more surely than any bell, but he knew that somehow or other he must prevent her from ringing the bell. It would echo all over the house in that tense and terrible midnight silence, and he knew what his instructions were—secrecy at any cost. He grabbed at Eleanor's arm and she attempted to keep him off with a book she still held as she sprang up from the table. He snatched it from her, a heavy brass-bound book. She made another effort to reach the bell, and Brusiloff brought down the book with a crash on her head. She fell like a log on the hearthrug, and he flung the book away impatiently. In that aching silence the sound of its fall echoed in Brusiloff's ears like thunder. Neither of them had uttered even a whisper. It all happened in the merest fraction of time, barely a minute.

Brusiloff declared that he had had no intention of killing Eleanor. At the moment he did not even know that he had killed her, but the noise of the book falling frightened him so much that he

shut the library door, and crept away once more to his hiding place under the stairs.

After all he dared not leave the paper, much as he longed to get rid of it, because if Eleanor recovered she would know that he had brought it, and if she died, and the police came into the business it would be only too obvious to them that her murderer must have had some connection with a document that was going to cause international complications.

He thought, considering deeply, that if no trace were found of any alien entry and departure, suspicion must fall on someone in the house. His only obsession was to get away and leave no trace. He did not give Eleanor another thought. She was of the class that had to be sacrificed. He did not even regret that he had killed a defenceless woman. From the crawling festering multitudes among whom he had spent most of his time, he had learnt to look on human life as cheap, and to do him justice he did not hold his own life dear, though he was prepared to fight for it.

He made the rustle that Kate had heard under the stairs just as Mr. Harman had made it, with his foot against some loose papers because he had been listening for someone to come down by the back stairs, and had stretched out his legs.

He got out of the house after Kate had opened the back door, in precisely the manner that Mr. Harman had supposed, and escaped through the door near Patch's kennel, crossed the kitchen garden, and made his way out by the shrubbery next to the long walk. But he still had the document

concealed under his waistcoat, and when he arrived in London his head office received him coldly. He had not obeyed their orders. He was told to go back and attempt once more to leave behind him at Greystones the incriminating document.

That second attempt was more successful. He did leave the document, and turned the room upside down in a real hurried frenzied search for suitable papers with which it might be mixed in order that it should escape attention. But in that he failed. There was not one single official document in the room. He heard Pratt moving, and so escaped as rapidly as he could.

He hoped at last to get his reward, and go to Paris to enjoy it in his own—doubtless diabolical—fashion, but again he met with disappointment. He found the Arcos organization severely shaken by the police raid on their property. The greater part of their expensively acquired information, if not destroyed, was "compromised" and rendered useless, but "Brusiloff's paper" was intact, and therefore more valuable than ever. It could never be proved, they thought, that they had handled it at all. They knew that the cipher was still in use, and believed that important information could still be tapped. When the paper was discovered at Greystones, the police would only believe, at the worst, that some Arcos agent had been looking for it, but had not found it. As subsequent events proved, that was exactly what happened.

Brusiloff's action was approved, but he was not allowed to go to Paris. He was sent to Cambridge to keep the usual watch on the Prince of Wales,

who was passing through that city, but the most useful thing he did there was to make friends with Green.

Meanwhile, to his great disappointment and dismay he heard that the solitary copy that had been made of the cipher key in " Brusiloff's paper " had been destroyed, more or less as a precaution, though by mistake, in connection with the raid. Another copy was urgently wanted. The man who made the original copy had memorized the key, but he had been taken up on some minor charge by the police, and for the moment was out of reach.

It was believed at the Arcos headquarters that the police had not discovered the paper, because they were said to be still hunting for Mr. Preston, as Brusiloff himself heard when he went to Scotland Yard to give information about the car at Cambridge.

He wrote very bitterly of the decision, that proved fatal, to send him once more to Greystones, to find the paper, not to take it away, but to copy the key. In that endeavour he failed, and so finished the story of Eleanor Wentworth's murder that has been here set down. Of the more stupendous revelations in his confession this is not the time or place to speak.

From beginning to end Brusiloff expressed no compunction. Fearless, pitiless and shameless, he died as he had lived.

CHAPTER XVI

"GRANDPAPA," said Molly, on a wintry afternoon, in the following January, as she walked through the garden at Greystones with Robert and Anthony, "do you know that Mr. Margetson has been promoted for his successful handling of the Brusiloff case?"

"I am sorry to hear it," said Robert, ungraciously, "because he owed it all to me."

"Aren't you rather conceited, Grandpa, dear? I think we all had a hand in it."

"Who had a hand in it, I should like to know? Did I not bring that fellow, Brusiloff, brute as he was, the most callous beast I ever came across, here to this house, by myself, unaided, and give instructions myself for him to be arrested? Was anyone else here, I should like to know? Margetson, or Smithers, or the Chief Constable himself, or you, Molly, or your father?"

"Margetson deserves everything he can get after his experience in the Z. 17," said Anthony. "He has the honesty to acknowledge that the catching of Brusiloff was none of his doing, though he got the *kudos* for it at Scotland Yard. He did turn up here in the nick of time. He owns that it is the only case in all his experience in which a man,

himself accused of a murder, has brought the real criminal to justice."

Robert smiled and lifted his shoulder in his characteristic fashion, with conscious self-satisfaction, but Molly went on, "Yes, but without us, Daddy and me, would you have moved one foot from this place? Would you have gone to Ely and hired a car and picked up a Bolshy chauffeur and all the rest of it?"

Robert laughed. "Oh, of course! That was only one of Anthony's wild-cat schemes!"

. . . . . .

Perhaps we may be allowed to hope that Eleanor Wentworth's loyal spirit rested content, less with the punishment of her murderer, the man who had so cruelly frightened her, than with the justice tardily done to Joseph Harper's memory. Robert Preston insisted on bringing that matter into court once more, at considerable cost to himself. He said that he now knew what it was to be wrongfully accused of crime, and that the best monument to Eleanor's memory would be the act of justice for which she had pleaded—almost with her last breath.

THE END

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